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The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

Leopold W. Bernhard

The Unpredictable God

James Armstrong • Left in the Lurch

J. A. Davidson • The Sound of the Trumpet

Lyman B. Stookey • The Believing Side of Life

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BERTRAM deH. ATWOOD • EVANGELISM AND BILLY GRAHAM

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The Pulpit

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PULPIT POST

More on Tithing

SIR: In answering Howard Donohue's letter, I would say, yes, indeed, there is a better way to support or finance the Christian church than tithing.It is God's way, for tithing was not ordained or commanded as a means or method of supporting the Christian church, or indeed, the Jewish temple.

Tithing was a method or plan ordained by which the sacrificial service was maintained, not by which the temple atmosphere or interior condition was made suitable for the performance of the service.

The tithe consisted of the "seeds," the "fruit of the tree and vine," the "tenth of the flock and herd," and in addition, the "offerings." Lev. 27: 30-34; Mal. 3: 8; 4: 4; Matt .23: 23; Luke 11: 42; Heb. 7: 5, etc.

Thus, the tithe supplied the essentia needs or requirements for the perfor mance of the sacrificial service, whil the offerings consisted of money pr vided for the orderly condition of th Temple interior, Luke 21: 1-4.

Therefore, the "offerings," not th "tithe" would supply or fulfill the pu pose for which the Christian churc is dependent upon for the promulga tion of the Gospel; moreover, while th tithe was limited to one-tenth, the sk so to speak, could be the limit for th offerings.

The spiritual significance of th lesson to be learned or derived fro the Jewish system of tithing for th Christian church is, it would seem, th marvelous provision God has ordaine to save sinners.

J. M. E. STRANGER
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXVIII AUGUST 1957 No. 8

Memo:

A GUEST editorial this month, from a man I know well and would have everyone know better. John Donne's poetry takes hold of students who meet it in literature classes. His person fascinates adults who know the complicated facts about this "poor intricated soule! Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthicall soule." But this summer I have had special reason to get to know John Donne's preaching. Editing a volume of his sermons for fall publication I have found paragraph after paragraph and page after page of wisdom addressed straight to preachers about their calling and their craft. Some of it is so special that it would be wasted in a book meant for general readership. So from just one sermon I have selected the following, letting the Reverend John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, speak to contemporary preachers: Aprill II, 1624, addressing August, 1957.

* * *

The taking, and leaving of a Church, is not an indifferent, an arbitrary thing; It is a *Mariage* . . . Amongst the *Jews*, it was almost an ignominous, an infamous thing, to die unmaried, at least to die without children, being maried . . . Indeed such men are most properly said to keep *this world* in reparations, that provide a succession of children; and for the *next world*, though all that are borne into this world, does not enter into the number of Gods Saints, in heaven, yet the Saints of heaven can be made out of no other materialls, but men borne into this world. Every stone in the quarry is not sure to be imployed in the building of the Church, but the Church must be built out of those stones; and therefore they keep this world, they keep heaven it selfe in reparation, that *mary* in the feare of God, and in the same feare bring up the children of such a mariage. But I presse not this too literally, not over perswasively, that every man is bound to *mary* . . . But being to use these words in their figurative application, I say, every man is bound to marry himselfe to a profession, to a calling: God hath brought him from being *nothing*, by creating him, but he resolves himselfe into nothing againe, if he take no calling upon him. In our *Baptisme* we make our contract with *God*, that we will believe all those *Articles* there receited; there's our contract with *him;* and then, pursuing this contract, in the *other Sacrament*, when we take his body and his blood, we are *maried* to him. So at the same time, at our *Baptisme*, we make a contract in the presence of God, and his congregation, with the *world;* that we will forsake the covetous desires of the world, that is, the covetous proprieting of all things to our selves, the covetous living onely for our selves, there's our contract with the world, that we will mutually assist, and serve our brethren in the world; and then, when we take *particular callings*, by which we are enabled to perform that former contract, then we are maried to the world; so every man is duly *contracted* to the world, in *Baptisme*, and lawfully *maried* to the world in accepting a *profession*. And so this service of ours to the Church is our mariage.

Honorable Burden

The burden of the sinnes of the *whole world*, was a burden onely for *Christs* shoulders; but the sinnes of *this Parish*, will ly upon my shoulders, if I be *silent*, or if I be *indulgent*, and denounce not Gods Judgment upon those sinnes. It will be a burden to us, if we doe not, and God knowes it is a burden to us, when we do denounce those Judgements . . . It burdened, it troubled, it grieved the holy Prophets of God, that they must denounce Gods judgements, though upon Gods enemies. We reade of a compassionate *Generall*, and looking upon his great Army, from a hill, fell into a bitter weeping, upon this consideration, that in fiftie or sixtie yeares hence, there will not be a man of these that fight now, alive upon the earth. What Sea could furnish mine eyes with teares enough, to poure out, if I should think, that of all this Congregation, which lookes me in the face now, I should not meet one, at the Resurrection, at the right hand of God! And for so much as concernes me, it is all one, if none of you be saved, as if none of you be saved by *my help*, my means, my assistance, my preaching. If I put you upon miraculous wayes, to be saved without hearing, or upon extraordinary wayes to be saved by *hearing others*, this shall aggravate my condemnation, though you be saved: How much more heavy must my burden be, if by my negligence both I and you perish too? So then this calling, this marriage, is a burden every way. When at any midnight I heare a bell toll from this steeple, must not I say to my selfe, what have I done at any time for the instructing or rectifying of that mans Conscience, who lieth there now ready to deliver up his own account, and my account to Almighty God? If he be not able to make a good account, he and I are in danger, because I have not enabled him; and

(Continued on page 26)

We Must Trust Him Completely, Obey Him Without Reservation

The Unpredictable God

By Leopold W. Bernhard

Luke 19:1-10

HOW well we know the story of Zacchaeus! How often we smile to ourselves when we picture the short, portly fellow perching on a branch of a tree, eager to see Jesus. How often we chuckle to ourselves when we imagine how his face fell when Jesus called up to him and he slid down that tree as fast as he could. But, actually, this whole story is so filled with the improbable, the unlikely, the impossible, that our eyes should bulge with disbelief.

It was improbable that a man like Zacchaeus, wealthy, powerful, and hated, should have the slightest inclination to see Jesus, the strange pauper prophet. It was even more unlikely that a man like Zacchaeus, spoiled by luxury, should expose himself to physical discomfort and risk looking ridiculous just to catch a glimpse of Jesus. It was unlikely that Jesus should notice the little fellow up in that tree. It was more unlikely that Jesus should at a glance recognize a need of Zacchaeus' heart, not consciously known to the man himself. It was unlikely that Jesus should prefer the hospitality of this rich man, who was known to owe his wealth to sharp if not crooked practices, to the invitations of the pious and righteous people of the town. After all, Jesus always preached and demanded righteousness of the highest type. It was unlikely, nay impossible, that a man like Zacchaeus should suddenly relinquish his lucrative business and reject his possessions for the sake of Jesus.

When you really look at the story, you find that it is so filled with the improbable, the unlikely, the impossible, that it becomes thoroughly unbelievable, and yet it has the ring of complete authenticity. It's a true story, all right.

I

The first chief message of the story of Zacchaeus is this: God is unpredictable; God is thoroughly unpredictable. And let's be frank; we don't like that. We don't like that one bit. We figure we have God pegged. We know how he reacts. We kno how he works. We know what he can do and wha he can't do.

We listen to the great promises of God. We loo at the tremendous challenge of the New Testament And it all sounds very nice, very beautiful, very am bitious, even heroic. God wants to save the world God wants to redeem all who surrender to him. W applaud; it's fine, it's great. We admit that Go honors us when he calls us as individuals and as congregation to be instruments of his saving power when through us he will pour out his love into ou community; when through us he will bring ligh and new life to the whole world. It sounds nic when the preacher says such things in a dimly-li pulpit. It even makes us feel good for a moment But then comes the great 'but.' But, of course, it' all quite impossible. After all, we have to recko with facts. We take it upon ourselves to remin God of reality, of the facts which our created brain can figure, digest and understand. We begin t reason that if God wants to save the world it is fine but he can't do it in our community. We have live in it. We know it. We have watched the efforts an struggles of our church to invade our communit for five years, for ten years, for thirty, for sixty And we know people. We know that they won't re spond. The idea is great, but let's not get carrie away.

If God wants to use us as individuals and as congregation, as tools of his salvation, that i beautiful, perhaps even ennobling. But we must b realistic. To be tools of God demands commitmen and means. Where are these to come from? W can't plunge into some big fancy program with al kinds of new services that we can't afford. Yes think of it, we always remind God that he can' count and figure. We measure God's claim with ou arithmetic. We are guardians of the church's prop erty. That is our duty. It is too bad that we can' give God a hand the way he wants us to.

These things are uncannily important, and no just from the point of view that any church mus be obedient to God and his will. After all, God wi accomplish his purpose at all cost. Just look at th Cross! That tells you that you can't dissuade Go from pursuing and from reaching his goal, not b any means. Not by indifference, not by disobedi ence, not by active resistance, not by sharpest rea

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oning. If we won't serve as God's instruments, God will find others. Of that we may be sure. Just emember that Jesus, when he pointed to his lisciples, said, "If these should keep silent, the very tones would cry out!" No, these things are so erribly important because of what they mean to our personal relationship to God.

II

You see, the most impossible thing in the world s the kind of religion which we seem to regard as perfectly natural. We turn to God with our personal roubles. We ask for his protection when we are fraid. We accept the assurance that he will forgive our sins and overcome our death. Yes, think of it. We expect that God will wipe out our sins, that he vill save us from the inevitable consequence of our eparation from him. But we don't believe that God an handle a real life situation. We don't believe hat God will provide the necessary means so that ve can actually become his tools. We don't believe hat he can successfully invade our community nd the hearts and minds of people living in our eighborhood.

Such religion is impossible. It is nothing but a itifully futile, pious phrase. Such religion is so leeply, fundamentally dishonest that it cannot but rove to be a hoax. For the fact is that it is much nore likely that God will convert every last soul n this city than that he will forgive my sin. It omes down to this: The most hopelessly imaginary dea is a predictable God. If God is, he is completely npredictable!

The New Testament proclaims exactly that kind f God. The unpredictable God runs through every age, every verse of the Bible like a flame. The postle with awe reflects, "The stone which the uilders rejected has been chosen by God the chief ornerstone!" The God who has come to us in Christ Jesus is the unpredictable God. We must rust him completely. We must obey him without eservation; for the unpredictable God alone is our Saviour, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier.

III

The other chief message of the story of Zacchaeus s that this unpredictable God will stop at nothing o save us and all men. That assurance alone makes fe possible.

Look at the condition of the world. It is hopeless o matter how you figure. The stormy developments f the last few decades have made that undoubtedly lear. Speed is one of the marks of our age; every ay brings new speed records on land, on sea, and n the air. The speed of communication has practi- ally eliminated the whole concept of distance. Therein lies a breath-taking promise for our human ommunity. We have become a neighborhood of eople all over the earth. But with equal speed we ave piled tragedy upon tragedy. It is by no means n academic question whether or not we can avoid he speedy advent of total catastrophe. Indeed, the est minds of humanity are laboring feverishly to revent the horrible event. But they simply don't get anywhere! And that too is a fact which we had better face. But God *will* save the world. It is the only hold we have. If we can't trust in that promise, life has lost all meaning.

Or look at your own condition. And I know that mine is exactly the same. Who among us can make light of his sin? Who among us does not know in his heart that his separation from God empties all his days of meaning? Who among us does not know that the kind of people we are cannot have fellowship with the Holy, Eternal God. And who among us does not feel with irresistable power that somehow our life, even our best efforts and intentions, are wasted as we rush pell mell toward death? We try all kinds of remedies and explanations, but they neither heal nor satisfy! But God will save us! That assurance alone can give us peace and courage and fill our life with purpose and joy.

What does all this amount to? Above all, it is a warning not to try to fit God into any kind of pigeon hole. If you do, you have lost him.

IV

Count on the unpredictable God. Although his promises sound beautiful if impossible, you and I will have to dare life on the basis of these promises. That's the whole point and issue. The fact is that God is our Saviour just because he *is* unpredictable. You cannot possibly predict the incarnation, God living with us, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. Nobody ever could predict these divine events. That's why they rejected him two thousand years ago, nailed him to a cross, and figured that they had established once again the predictable God who would work according to their neat little plans and calculations. And then he rose from the dead and tore all their arithmetic into little shreds. Thank God for it. Thank God!

The unpredictable God wants to save you, and through us he wants to save our world and even our community, just as he saved Zacchaeus. The one big question is, "Will you personally trust him and dare to surrender your very self to him?" You will have to answer that question in the loneliness and privacy of your soul, with the eye of God looking steadily into yours. The big question for us as a church is: "Will we as a congregation trust him, or those who figure it cannot be done? Will we as a congregation dare to surrender to him in unlimited, ever increasing, ever growing service; or will we be disobedient and hide behind our knowledge, behind our reasonable piety, which is really nothing but our warped selfwill?" We will answer that question in the bright light of congregational action very soon, and the eyes of God will be riveted upon us.

The thing to remember is the story of Zacchaeus and the unpredictable God who did the unlikely, the improbable, the impossible. This unpredictable God will save you and make us his tools of salvation because of his everlasting mercy and goodness. He looks at us now and he calls to us, "I want to be your guest, let me come in."

As we open the door to him in joyous, absolute surrender, he will bless us: "Today salvation is come to this house." Amen.

By Bertram deHeus Atwood

EVANGELISM

I Corintians 1:22, 23

O Thou who through the foolishness of preaching hast declared thy love, search us and know our hearts. Help us to say nothing nor to think anything that is unworthy of thy name. Amen.

FIRST of all, I want you to get the background of our text. Paul had come to Corinth; he heard some people saying, "I belong to Apollos' faction because I was baptized by him." Others said, "No, Apollos is not intellectual enough. I belong to Cephas and his crowd." Thus, very early in its life, its members were beginning to fragmentize the one Church, the Body of Jesus Christ. It was as if I should say that I like Billy Graham, you say you can't abide him, and we argue about that instead of seeing that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Now listen to the text: "The Jews look for a sign. The Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to them who believe the wisdom and power of God."

Paul is not speaking in an anti-Semitic sense. Indeed, he is talking about people of his own culture, and about his own experience. He says, "We were looking for a sign. We wanted God to do something. Look, God has done something before. He has taken his people through the Red Sea. He has proved to them that he is God. And that is what we Jews want—we want proof. We want peace of mind; we want purpose; we want prosperity. We're Jews, God. We're the chosen people. Come down, God, and do something *now* to show that thou art God."

Rational Proof

The Greeks, on the other hand, wanted the existence of God proved to them by rational exercise. "We shall not believe," said the Greeks, "unless you can prove to us that there's a God. We have minds, and you have to respect them. Sit down with us and let's debate the existence of God."

But Paul knew it was useless. You can't argue a man into believing in God. Even if a man should make an intellectual assumption that there is a god, that doesn't mean that he believes in *God*. It means only that he believes there is such a person as God. "No," says Paul, "The only clue to the knowledge of God is to see in Jesus Christ the personal confrontation of reality and 'proof' that in Jesus is the answer. All we can do is stammer and stumble when we begin to talk about this man who is wiser than wisdom, who will not force us or cajole, but whose only sign will be love and a life spent for others."

You see, the Jews wanted God to spell his name out in letters of fire. The Greeks wanted to sit down and argue about God lucidly and logically. But Jesus is no argument, or will he debate with you or come down and slam-bang you into belief.

Billy Graham

A few weeks ago Billy Graham came with the sound of many trumpets into New York. Since that time there have been thousands who made decisions for Christ there in Madison Square Garden. There are thousands, of others who attended the crusade and were repelled by it. So divergent are the views concerning Billy that there is an urgent need for critical judgment so that every person can perceive that it is not Billy Graham, or Presbyterianism, or American Christianity, but Jesus Christ who reigns.

I have severe restrictions and reservations concerning Billy Graham. I have heard him four times. I have beeen to some of the training sessions for counselors; and I am well aware that he can repel some, but the guidance of God's Spirit will also attract many and make them newly aware, not of Billy Graham, but of Jesus Christ.

Reservations

But let me first give you some of my reservations —and they are severe ones. In the first place the way Graham says "The Bible says . . . the Bible says . . . the Bible says," over and over like some hypnotic incantation, seems to indicate that he has a formal and wooden interpretation of scripture. He frequently uses the illustration that if we are the

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AND BILLY GRAHAM

judges of scripture we can say of a page, "This is not the word of God," and rip it out, do the same with another page, and end up, says Graham, with ten million versions of Holy Scripture. "No wonder," he says, "that the ministry and the laypeople in the churches are confused. We no longer find the Bible authoritative."

Of course this is a problem for modern Christians. But the answer to that problem, it seems to me, is not to go back to a wooden formalism that accepts the Book as some kind of dead, authoritative matter that must be slavishly accepted. The Bible, to me, is the Living Word. You do not take it literally as if every page had the exact, final word of God. Rather, the Bible is the dialogue, the conversation between God and his people. God uses erring minds and strange ways, takes people as and where they are and begins to call them to himself. He has men search. You see, if the Bible is such that we cannot reason with it, then we are slaves. It means that instead of having the freedom of the Christian mind, we are people who must abide by what is said in cold print without any direct confrontation with the living God.

I compare the Bible to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. What do we mean when we say that God took on human nature? We mean that God limited himself in Jesus to life on our terms, to face it with our haunting fears and frustrations, with our sorrows, doubts and joys, to work through the problems of human existence on the same level that you and I face them. And if Jesus Christ was really human and had to work things out on our level, then surely God would not have given us a word so final that there is no chance for us to work out the truth in cooperation with him. The Bible, then, is not "true." It is Jesus Christ who is Truth and who confronts us in the Bible. The Bible can be understood only as we see Jesus Christ searching for us within its pages, recognizing that Christ is the authority that awakens us from our slavery.

False Individualism

My second reservation is that Billy Graham seems to stress a false individualism. One Sunday I heard him preach on the atomic bomb and the end of the world. Believe me, I was terribly moved and felt condemned for my own faltering faith. But after the emotional impact was over and I began to think, I realized that what Graham was saying was that in order to escape the atom bomb we had to go to Jesus and Jesus would help us to escape this world. Of course we know that in any event the world is coming to an end and that you and I are going to die—maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow, maybe twenty years from now. But it struck me that this is not the whole of salvation that I know in Jesus Christ, for salvation means being salvaged, being put to use.

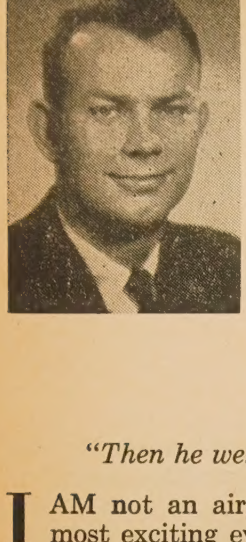
I have discovered Jesus Christ not in a strict isolation which closes me out of the world or off in some cloud; I find Jesus in the midst of the common humanity. I find Jesus as I begin to share with my brothers the love of God. I know that my salvation is not something in which I am swooped up out of this world, but a force by which I am sent back into the world to recognize that in the simple, exacting day-by-day experiences of demanding Christian living I shall know Jesus. He will abide as I live as one of the brethren and try to seek peace. With this new insight that Jesus gives me I will recognize that heaven is not some dreary place far off in the sky but consists of this new relationship.

Fear and Judgment

My third, and perhaps most severe, criticism of Graham is his preaching of fear and judgment. Typical of his approach is an illustration I heard him use recently. The story tells of a man from a southern state who wished to run for the United States Senate but knew that he could not be elected by a southern Protestant electorate unless he were a member of a church. He therefore joined a church to assure his election. After becoming a Senator, he was working in his office one Sunday morning instead of being in church where he should have been. One of his constituents came to him for advice, but the Senator was too busy to spare the time. He said, "Brother, I'm so busy that I wouldn't even have time for Jesus Christ if he came into the room this morning." Then Graham's comment was that that afternoon the Senator dropped dead.

Now to me, whether he meant the urgency of decision or something else, this kind of fear and judgment is not the fear of the living God that I have experienced in Jesus Christ. The implication of

(Continued on page 10)



Left in the Lurch?

By James Armstrong

"Then he went home. . . ." Mark 3:19

I AM not an airplane pilot, but I imagine the most exciting event in the life of a pilot is his first solo flight. The instruments which determine his course are before him. The machine that carries him aloft encloses him. His mind clings to that knowledge which will spell life or death for him. The instructor is not there! The student pilot is thrown on his own resources for the first time. His fate rests in his own hands.

There comes a time in the life of every man when his parents can no longer shield and protect him; his employer can no longer overlook his costly mistake, the teacher can no longer provide answers for his faltering study. No one else can function for him. He must either sink or swim.

Early in his ministry Jesus took twelve devoted friends into the hills near Capernaum. They discussed his mission together. He appointed them to preach and to cast out demons. The kingdom movement was entrusted to their hands. Then, Mark tells us, Jesus went home. For the moment, the disciples were left alone with their thoughts and with their task.

We Have a Standard

So it is with Christian discipleship. The Nazarene becomes the standard for our lives; we seek to bring our wills together with the will divine, only to discover that we have inherited a frightening new freedom. Christ does not take over the controls of our lives. He points the way and then looses us into a new world of responsible service. He does not abandon us. He doesn't leave us in the lurch. He simply bids us to stand up and become men. In a sense he puts us more on our own than we have ever been before.

Jesus Christ makes available the greatest freedomman can know. In Guy Rowe's painting "Creation" the first six days of time are recorded. In the background there are light and darkness, water and firmament, vegetation and animal life. In the foreground is a man, alone. Back of him, the hand of God. And so it was! Adam was thrust into life by that hand. He was surrounded by the elements that were yet to be mastered. He was free—free to choose Eden or the serpent. The fall of man was also his rise, his rise to responsibility. Man would no longer enjoy automatically the fruits of Paradise. Now he would have to earn them by the sweat of his brow. This terrible freedom has always been a part of man's existence.

Man is free. And yet, in quite another sense, until he freely chooses truth man is a slave. He is a slave to the drabness of life about him. He is a slave to the murky darkness within himself. Paul talked about people being slaves of sin. When we misuse our freedom we build our own prison cells and rot therein.

"I Am the Truth"

Our Lord said, "I am the truth . . . and the truth shall make you free." Living truth and religious faith our indivisible. Christ and truth are one.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther tacked his 95 history-making theses to the church door at Wittenberg. In so doing he affirmed his own selfhood and declared that the truth was his master. The machinery of the church opposed him; the power of the state opposed him; centuries of tradition opposed him. But, more important than church and state, more important than position and tradition, was the fact that Martin Luther had to live with himself. He knew that the sale of indulgences was wrong. So were the land-grabbing policies of the church. So was its intellectual blindness. Martin Luther belonged to Christ. Therefore, he knew that he had the strength to oppose wrong. Christ made him free! He had to act!

You see, freedom marches hand in hand with grave responsibility.

Freedom and Responsibility

A person in chains cannot be driven to responsible living. Men in solitary confinement or on a road gang or on a rock pile may be out of circulation. Society may be thus protected. But the prisoners are not learning citizenship. They are not being prepared for mature participation in society. A prison system is effective only as it prepares its inmates to leave their cells more responsible than when they entered.

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When inmate Number 223069 walks out the penitentiary gate he is on his own. He can return to the irresponsible gutters of crime or he can become a worthy citizen. He is free now. His freedom presses in upon him. What will he do with it?

Every form of freedom carries with it corresponding responsibility.

There is economic freedom. Wealth can create a Ford Foundation or it can pamper a lad who has inherited it, through no personal merit, and make of him an irresponsible playboy. The same kind of dollar that buys a solid gold Cadillac can build a chapel on a neglected hillside in Cuba. What we do with our money speaks volumes.

There is intellectual freedom. Albert Einstein and Joseph Goebbels were both Germans. Einstein was one of the 20th century's most brilliant scientists and humanitarians. Goebbels, who had a phenomenal mind, used his brilliance to stamp out Jews, drive men like Einstein from his nation and enslave a continent.

There is cultural freedom. We are free in America to elevate those particular cultural values that mean something to us. The fact that we have idolized the Jayne Mansfields and the Elvis Presleys to the neglect of the Shakespeares and Mozarts does not speak well of our taste or intelligence. It does prove our cultural freedom.

There is political freedom. Bombardment and blood-letting in Hungary and Poland are present reminders of the price of liberty. Our colonial forefathers paid dearly for the freedom they won. And each succeeding generation must measure up to the demands of its hour if freedom is to be preserved. In his, *One World*, Wendell Willkie pointed out that freedom is an indivisible word and if we want to enjoy it, we must fight for it and be willing to extend it to everyone whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their race or the color of their skin. Freedom is made secure only as we accept our responsibilities for it.

Personal Freedom

Personal freedom is just as hard come by as national freedom. Martin Luther was never freer than when he stood before the Diet of Worms and cried out, "Here I stand! God helping me, I can do no other." He almost lost his life. But he changed the course of modern history and made peace with himself.

When Schweitzer left his organ, left his professorship, left the plaudits of the crowd, and decided to become a doctor with a purpose, he declared his freedom.

And when Jesus smiled in the face of an empire and freely chose a cross, he refused to be a slave to cowardice or custom. That sublime freedom of action that marched into the yawning jaws of death itself gave rise to a faith that has given the world a new birth.

But each of these men—Luther, Assisi, Schweitzer, Christ—accepted with their freedom a lion's share of responsibility. The burdens of the world became their own. They lived to serve!

Now let's go back to the twelve men on a hillside. Jesus had shared his vision with them. Their hearts were racing as they dreamed his great dream. He said, "This is your task too." He anointed them to do the impossible. And then he went home.

Was it fair? Did he leave them in the lurch? Never! He simply let them know that he could not do for them that which they would have to do for themselves. This was their job as well as his. They would disappoint him. They would misunderstand and forsake him. One of their number would betray him. But even so, their course of action would vindicate his judgment.

Philip would carry the glad tidings down into Ethiopia. Thomas would cross desert and mountain to bear the word to India. Peter and James would be imprisoned and put to death for the heroism of their witness. But, out of their efforts and out of their sacrifice would rise the gold-tinted spires of the City of God. The blood of martyrs would be the seed of the Church.

These were free men. As free men they would accept the challenge of responsible, purposeful living. And so must we.

Thoughts from a Sermon

Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses . . .

TWO old cronies, generals Eisenhower and Montgomery, took a sweep in a jeep and a walk across a Civil War battlefield a few weeks ago and did a bit of debunking. There would seem to be little reason for this posthumous assault on Lee and Meade. Perhaps Ike and Monty were finding an escape from the confused and bewildering situation along the far-flung cold war battleline of the present day. At any rate, two eminent Civil War generals were made to look like amateur strategists.

Of military matters I am no judge, but I will say that as costly as the blunders of Lee and Meade may have been, human destiny in the larger sense was not riding on their decisions. They could afford a few mistakes. But this is a luxury which top-ranking world leaders cannot afford at this hour. The wrong strategy by the generals of current international affairs can be tragic, indeed, calling down a baptism of atomic fire upon all nations.

At least the well landscaped battlefield of Gettysburg still remains. Flowers blossom by the winding trails, the oriole flashes his color in the hedgerow; the lark flies upward, giving back and exhilirating song. But in the event of atomic war there will be no one left at the scene to criticize our gross stupidity. There will be only a few scorched salamanders crawling our charred ruins, and here and there vultures hopping heavily from skeleton to skeleton, consuming their radiation-contaminated diet. It could be so!

Considering these things, would it not be wise for us to engage in a bit of self-criticism *now* concerning the effects of what we do and say upon the destiny of the planet and its people?—*Mitchell S. Epperson, Northminster Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

Graham

(Continued from page 5)

Graham's message seems to be that God is waiting around for our love, and if we fail to love him he will damn us. If this is true, then, the whole gospel has gone out the window; for as I understand it, Jesus did not wait for men to repent before he went out to them. He went out and lived where we were: He walked our streets; he rubbed elbows even with us who are sinners; and he abided. In his abidingness we find our condemnation, for the judgment of Jesus is to face the white, clean purity of him and know how mean and dirty we are. In spite of the little good we can see in ourselves, Jesus will abide with us, even to the end.

The fear of God is not the fear of a rattlesnake either, an illustration Graham has used. God is fearsome because he has loved me so abidingly and yet I have betrayed him. How can I face this love, knowing what I am like? I fear to face him the way I would fear to face my mother if she knew some of the things that I have done. To fear the anguish in the face of God is to fear the Father's haunting love.

I believe that for many people, though one feels condemned and moved, the real meaning of Billy Graham will be that it helps us be more discerning about our own faith. As one journalist put it, "God may be as simple as Billy Graham thinks, but I am quite convinced that the devil is not that simple."

The Church Condemned

Having criticized Graham, I must now say in a positive way that he is a condemnation upon the Christian church. We have grown fat and prosperous and think that the current prosperity within the church is enough. We have become complacent. We have acted as if we had all eternity to make up our minds, and the great significance of Graham is that he is telling us that right here and now we are making up our minds and deciding for or against Life. He is telling us that there is a moment of urgency about this gospel of ours; that there are millions of people, even within the Christian church, who are living in the tattle-tale-gray world of heartbreak—who can't make up their minds what to do, who live in fear, who are frustrated, joyless—bleak people who need to know that at this present moment God loves them and cares for them. My friends, if you and I have any sense of the love of God, any sense of what God has done for us, then we ought to have an urgency about our message that will condemn our complacency.

We are also condemned by Billy Graham because he takes seriously the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. He doesn't put it in terms that I can understand, but I do believe this—that the Christian gospel is a gospel of forgiveness. We are still acting as if all we have to do to be Christian is to be decent . . . that if we are nice enough and sweet enough and don't steal our neighbor's purse or cut his throat God will take us in. The gospel is the good new that right here and now, in this present momen God has forgiven—that the whole past is gone, dead issue. It no longer has a hold on us and righ now we can enter into the abiding love of God.

The love of God is greater than our fears and ou frustrations; the love of God is more solid tha anything we can do. Forgiveness is the restoratio into the new fellowship, a new conviction that Jesu Christ can change even us. It is all of God!

I read somewhere not long ago how things ca be changed. It is said that Longfellow could tak an old sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and i could be sold for six thousand dollars. That i genius. They tell me that John D. Rockefeller coul take a white sheet of paper, put his name on it, pu a one with six zeroes after it and sell it for a millio dollars. That is capital. They tell me that a me chanic can take a piece of metal worth five cents cleverly trim and work it and sell it for five dollars That is skill. I also know that God can take a sinful human life, like yours or mine, and enter int it and re-make it. That is forgiveness.

As Christians we do not have to put our heads o the shelf. Nor must we become so emotionally overwhelmed that we do not think through the implications of God's love for our lives. In addition, it must be stated that we don't find Jesus Christ by waiting for a sign, or through a debate. We meet him as we do any person with whom we fall in love.

"The Jews look for a sign; the Greeks seek afte wisdom, but we would preach Christ crucified, the wisdom and power." Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

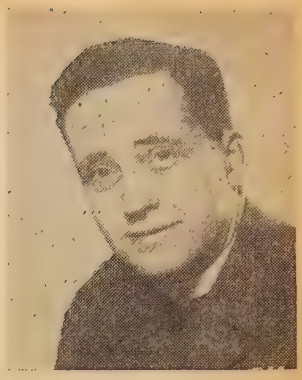
GOD, our Heavenly Father, who by the might of thy Spirit has created us, and who in tender concern has redeemed us, we look to thee fo strength, for hope and for health.

When life loses its glow and we cannot meet each day with new anticipation, revive our fainting souls.

When sorrow comes, and we know not which way to turn, give us new awareness of thy eternal purposes which cannot be defeated.

And when in the course of life our bodies fail, lift our spirits by the might of thy Spirit, O God. Lead us in the way everlasting when finally there shall be no more pain, but new life in thee.

We cannot but praise thee for every manifestation of thy love—the world of nature, the homes of which we are a part, our church—which as the body of Christ helps mediate the gospel to the world. Renew our faith in thee that we too may become channels of thy grace. Help us to give as we have been given unto, to love as we have been loved, to forgive as we have been forgiven. In thy will is our peace. In thee is eternal life. And in thy gospel, the enduring hope of the world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—*Warren A. Nyberg, First Methodist Church, Red Wing, Minnesota.*



The Sound of the Trumpet

By J. A. Davidson

My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Jeremiah 4:19

THIS cry of anguish from the great prophet Jeremiah finds the modern heart responsive. Jeremiah lived in a time when the established order of things was challenged. The shadow of war, total war, was cast over Jeremiah's world, and despair lay heavily on the hearts of men. We must not, of course, push too far a parallel between Palestinian civilization of some twenty-five centuries ago and civilization in this atomic age—but man's heart has not changed as man's circumstances have changed, and Jeremiah's anguish is the anguish of the sensitive heart today. "My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war."

In these days we do hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. And our hearts do beat wildly, and we cannot keep silent. We live in a world gone mad—and we know that if the world's madness is allowed to run its course it can mean the end of everything.

Someone has whimsically defined an optimist in the atomic age as a person who regards the future as uncertain. But even that kind of optimism, that rather negative hopefulness, is not easily sustained nowadays. We hope and pray that the West and the East will somehow be able to resolve their differences without recourse to full-scale war. But all of us face the future apprehensively, and our hearts are beating wildly. We cannot dissipate the shadow which hangs over our world merely by wishing it were not there. We cannot keep silent. We must all in some way respond to the sound of the trumpet which we hear so clearly, and I suggest to you that there are three patterns of response open to us. First, there is the response of *despair;* second, the response of *escapism;* and third the response of *creative hope.*

I

First, there is the response of *despair*, utter despair. This is the response of the man who says that the future is certain, that, do what we will, war, total war, is inevitable. That damnable dogma is a dogma of despair. It is crude fatalism which sees man as a helpless puppet, moved by strings held by malignant deities. It is a cowardly dogma. It is cynicism gone to seed. In the final analysis it is abject surrender to evil. It is what John Henry Jowett called the atheism of despair. It is a craven refusal to resist evil. It is one thing to face the fact that war is possible, but quite another to embrace the idea that war is inevitable. Indeed, the belief that war is inevitable will certainly help to make it so, for we do not resist that which we think inevitable. Many people today have allowed themselves to be stifled by the scent of despair. It gets into every corner of life and corrupts every activity of man. Aldous Huxley, in his strange novel of a few years ago *Ape and Essence* wrote that fear is the very basis of modern life, because we fear war, don't want war and yet do everything we can to bring about. Yes, the mood of despair has settled heavily on the heart of man today. Despite the world-wise and realistic pose which despair often affects, it is the response of the moral coward, the response of the man who has lost his nerve.

Despair is the way of damnation. It is the way of suicide. It is the way of surrender to evil. It is the denial of all the values of civilization. Despair is the force that can carry us to annihilation.

II

Second, there is the way of *escapism.* Escapism is akin to despair. It is despair gone soft and sentimental, despair turned upside-down. Despair takes some of the facts, the alarming ones, and looks on them as if they were all the facts. Escapism turns its back on the menacing facts of man's condition today and pretends that they aren't there.

Of course, it is a good thing to cultivate a certain amount of escapism. Our mental and emotional health is dependent on our periodical escapes from the hurly-burly of life.

But the danger here is in making escapism the master motive of life, rather than using it as a necessary but occasional aid to the good life. Of course, all of us have those moments when we'd like to turn our backs on everything, to escape from the world of today with all its menace and its confusion and its uncertainty. And we do need to es-

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cape periodically from the world of harsh reality, to escape into a never-never land for a while, a land where there is no sound of the trumpet. But we delude ourselves if we think that we can take up permanent residence there. "Let's pretend" is a pleasant and refreshing game to play—if we don't overdo it. But we can't pretend that there is absolutely no possibility of war. We can't pretend that the issues between the Communist and non-Communist worlds will disappear if we turn our backs on them. We can't pretend that everything in the garden is simply lovely—when as matter of hard, harsh fact it isn't.

Escapism as a tool to be used on occasion is both necessary and beneficial. But as a master motive for life it is simply despair gone flabby. Escapism is, in the final analysis, a way of despair, a surrender of evil.

III

Third, there is the responsive of *creative hope.* This is the Christian's response. To lose hope is to lose God. To give way to despair is to throw God out of your life. Christianity has always been a religion of hope. As one New Testament scholar, C. E. B. Cranfield, has written: "The most striking characteristic that distinguished the early Christians from their pagan neighbors was their *hope.* . . . Unlike their pagan neighbors, the early Christians were men of hope, who could look steadily into the future without fear, not with mere resignation, but with eager anticipation."

The hope of the early Christians was not a pollyanna hope, a complacent optimism which refused to face the facts. It was not resignation—that is, despair with a coat of philosophical varnish. The hope of the early Christians was a living, creative hope, a hope that put motive back into life, a hope that trusted in God, trusted that God is good and that God cares for and about man.

The Christian's hope is realistic. It does not claim to have all the answers. It does not profess to be able to lift the curtain of time and peer into the future. It does not presume to predict a blissful tomorrow, with the shadows dispersed and the world basking in pure light. There is nothing fanciful or silly or complacent about this Christian hope. It faces the facts. It has a touch of sternness. It proclaims the great fact of God standing over and above the facts of this world. It sings out, in the words of the First Epistle of St. Peter:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

No, Christian hope hasn't all the answers. It doesn't profess to be able to blueprint the future of civilization. But because it is rooted in trust in God it refuses to yield to despair. The hope which we have in God through Jesus Christ releases into our lives new motives, new strength, new courage. Hope is the ground of moral stamina, and hope is the ground of our salvation.

Our hope today is in the goodness of God. The cry of anguish in these times is the cry of Jeremiah: "My heart is beating wildly; I canot keep silen for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm war." The Christian's response to this anguish his heart is: "Blessed be the God and Father of ou Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have bee born anew to a living hope."

Pastoral Prayer

O THOU who art Alpha and Omega, the begin ning and the end, we laud and praise thy hol name. Throughout our life thy loving kindness an tender mercies have attended us on our way. Unde the shadow of thy wing, thou hast kept us safe. O this plessed Sabbath day we return thanks to the for thy goodness. We thank thee for all things tha are beautiful and true and good; for the whisper ing winds and the refreshing rains. But more espe cially do we thank thee for the joy and zest of life for the privilege which is ours to live and labor i thy vineyard. May we never waver in our allegianc to thee. Throughout all our life keep our heart and minds centered on thee that we may come t know thee, whom to know is everlasting life.

Before thy throne of grace we remember all c thy little ones. Guard them in their play and i their work. May the fresh air and the warm su strengthen their bodies and fit them for the strug gle of life. Especially do we pray for the childre who know only poverty and want. Help all of u who have been born into happy homes to feel corporate responsibility for those less privilege than we are. May our hearts be touched by thei sorrow, and in thy infinite goodness grant unt them that peace and joy which the world ca neither give nor take away.

We pray also for our young people who in th trying period of adolescence are seeking after th realities of life. Save them from unwholesome cyni cism and a life of riotous living. Grant unto then a strong and vital faith which will conquer thei doubts, and stay their souls on thee. Lead then into the truth that they may know in whom the believe, and for whom they serve.

We also remember in our prayers those of u who have reached the meridian of life. Save u from passivity, from complacency, from being satis fied with ourselves and with things as they are Give us more and more of thy divine discontent that we may not be satisfied with the good, bu may press on toward the better. Make our religion dynamic and meaningful that we may ever liv triumphant lives.

Finally we pray for those who have labored lon in thy vineyard. As the shadows of life lengthe and the busy world is hushed may they find thei rest and peace in thee. Throughout their lives the have served thee with willing hearts. Take then now under the shadow of thy wing, and grant then thy peace and heavenly benediction.

This is our morning prayer which we ask in th name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior Amen. — *John Schott, Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.*

Questions We Must Ask Ourselves Concerning Our Faith

Living on the Believing Side of Life

By Lyman B. Stookey

Yet my brothers, I do not consider myself to have arrived spiritually, nor do I consider myself already perfect, but I keep going on, grasping ever more firmly that purpose for which Christ grasped me.
Philippians 3:13 —Philips

I'D like to talk to you about the meaning of faith. For when it comes to our faith, most of us, I think, can find a common ground with Paul, who wrote to the Philippians, "Brothers, I do not consider myself to have arrived spiritually." Half believing, half doubting, wanting to have faith but not quite knowing what it is all about, most of us are pretty confused. We have all been told rather glibly to live by faith; we have read the moving stories of men and women of faith in today's self help books and perhaps even in the Bible. But still the question in our minds begs for an answer, "What is this faith we are meant to have?" So then, I'd like to talk to you about the meaning of faith and try to give an answer to three questions about it: Do I have to believe all the Church says to have faith? How can I get faith? What should I do when I have doubts about my faith?

Must I Believe the Church

Do I have to believe all the Church says to have faith? What about the Apostle's Creed, for example? Do I have to believe all that? The so-called "beliefs of the Church" have been the biggest stumbling block to the laymen ever since the Church began saying, "You have to believe this or that or you are not a Christian." The trouble is there are a lot of things in creeds which don't make sense to the modern mind. It's like the American soldier who changed the line in Browning's poem from "God's in his heaven and all's right with the world" to "God's in his heaven and all's *riot* with the world." You and I live in a catastrophic time and the destiny of the world seems far removed from the hand of God. So it is, there are a lot of things we have been told to believe that just don't square with life as we know it.

That's the problem, and the answer to it is this: God doesn't demand that you and I give assent to a number of propositions which make no sense to us. There isn't a single instance in the whole Bible, from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, where God demands that a person believe statements about him. Unfortunately the Church has often forgotten this Biblical fact and so has confused two completely different ideas—to believe something and to believe in something. God doesn't demand that we believe this or that *about* him; what he does demand is that we believe *in* him. Perhaps a better word to use would be to trust in him. The claim of the Christian is not, "If you have faith your intellectual problems will be solved." Rather it is the simple testimony, "I tried to trust in myself and found myself failed me, and so I was lead to trust in God and God has not failed me." Faith is a way of living life trusting in God; it isn't something we have when we stop thinking or using our minds, it isn't a formula to apply to perplexing problems.

Now of course the minute you begin to believe *in* God, to trust him, you will begin to believe something *about* him as well. What you may come to believe about God may or may not be stated in the same terms as the creeds, but the point is that all of that comes *after* faith and is not faith itself. The answer to the first question is, then, that you don't have to swallow a bunch of ideas to have faith.

If faith doesn't come by assenting to propositions about God, the second question is this: "How can I get faith?" That is the real point. I've been told what will happen to my life if only I had faith, but how can I get it? Does faith always come in some great experience, like a bolt from the blue?

Living in Christ

For some of us faith does come suddenly in a kind of divine experience, but for most of us our faith will be the product of years of living. A bystander once asked John Wesley how he could believe in Christ and the answer was this: "Live Christ and you will believe in Christ." "To live Christ" is what I would call living on the believing side of life. Too many of us are so conscious of what we don't believe that we fail to see what we do believe. We can make so little sense of the seemingly complicated creeds of the Church, that we don't even keep sight of what little sense we can

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make of them. We live too much on the unbelieving side of life. To begin to live on the believing side is to start with whatever you do believe, with whatever you can trust in, and go from there. Perhaps at this point you can honestly say, "I believe in God who is a power greater than myself." That's fine! Begin with that, live as if it were really true and see what happens. For if there is a God who is greater than yourself, doesn't that mean that you can live with a kind of acceptance for what life brings. Doesn't it mean, as well, that your job is to do the very best with the talents you have been given and leave the rest to God. Live that way for a while and you will know what the Bible means by faith. Or again, if you believe in a God who is a greater power than yourself, doesn't it follow that you ought to try to tune your life to that power. Doesn't it mean that you ought to try to find out where that power is leading men and nations and where it is leading you? Try doing that and you have prayed, for as someone has said, "Prayer is plugging into the power of the universe."

Or perhaps your faith might begin at another point. Maybe you can say, "I believe right is better than wrong." That doesn't sound much like the Apostle's Creed or the Westminister Confession, but still that's where you are today, so begin there and see what happens. Live as if right were really better than wrong, always better, not just when it is easier or when it serves your own interests. See if pretty soon the kinds of decisions demanded of you at home and at work don't eventually make you realize that right is not only an eye for an eye, but that it means doing right even when it hurts, loving those who don't love you in return, even loving those who hate you. Live that way and you will know what Christ meant when he said, "Whosoever would find his life, must lose it."

There was a man named Horace Bushnell whose faith began in just this way. His faith didn't come easy any more than yours does. He knew well what the Church claimed, but he couldn't make any sense of it all. What the Church was saying just didn't square with his life, and so he spent his time refuting it. Until one day he thought, "What's the use of my trying to get further knowledge so long as I do not cheerfully yield to what I already know?" It was one of those questions he couldn't stop asking, until one day he prayed this prayer:

> "O God, I believe there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and I hereby give myself up to do the right and to refrain from the wrong. I believe that thou dost exist, and, if thou canst hear my prayer and will reveal thyself to me, I pledge myself to do thy will, and I make this pledge fully, freely and forever."

That prayer was the beginning of a life which had a great influence on all American Christianity. Horace Bushnell went on to be one of the great Christians of his day, the founder of the Christian Nurture Movement. How can I get faith? Begin where you are to live on the believing side of life and, in Paul's terms, press on.

This kind of living by faith, however minimum that faith may be, is not easy. There will com times when what you have previously believed an put your faith in will make no sense at all. It wi get you into jams, whether you begin with "I be lieve right is better than wrong" or with "I believ in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven an earth." There will be times when you will doub the whole business and wish you had never begun and so the third question: "What should I do whe I have doubts about my faith?"

The answer is: "Go ahead and doubt." Don't b scared of your doubts; if they are honest and sin cere they will drive you to deeper faith, for they ar the searching of your mind and heart for new hori zons yet unknown. Down through history doubt ha been just this kind of driving force in the lives o men. Columbus doubted the long accepted theory that the world was flat. And doubting it he could have spent the rest of his days in Spain, but in stead his doubt drove him across the Atlantic Ocean to discover a new world, a world which was round So, too, with Thomas Edison, as a young man al ways searching to go beyond the accepted ideas o his age, unsatisfied with contemporary belief, and his doubts drove him to discover the electric light

Should I Doubt

So it is with the religious life: to doubt is to drive the soul and mind to greater depths of understanding. The dean of Union Seminary used to say that faith only comes when our gods become too small. When something happens to your life, be it some great catastrophe or some great good which doesn't fit the patterns of life you have worked out when the way you see God isn't big enough for life the way it is, you begin to wonder if you oughtn't discard what you had believed for the sake of more meaningful belief. The trouble with most of us is that when we begin to doubt what we have previously believed we refuse to see that our doubts demand a greater and not a lesser faith. Doubts don't say to us, "Destroy your faith." But rather, "Build a greater faith, a more adequate one." It was for this reason that Tennyson wrote, "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." When your God becomes too small, and you begin to doubt, let your doubts drive you to a broader and a deeper faith.

To live on this side of life is like setting out on a never-ending adventure. In this adventure your faith will never stop changing. There will never come a day when you will be able to sit back, satisfied, and say, "At last, I've got it. This is the final answer and this my final faith." The way of faith is a rewarding way, but its finish is somewhere in infinity.

There are no road maps here which tell you the only way to go, for the journey is all your own. But there are some pointers along the way, pointers which have helped men and women before you, which can be yours too if you will venture along that road: a baby born in a manger, some parables and teachings, a packed jury box, a cross set on a hillside and at last a Sunday morning of resurrection.

Beautiful Extravagance

By Royal F. Shepard, Jr.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trou-le her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. Mark 14:6

THERE is still a dose of *Poor Richard's Alma-nac* in the veins of most Americans. We deplore waste. We like to mix all our good deeds with a strong dash of prudence. However freely we give, we want to be sure that there is some tangible profit for him who receives. But there are outpourings of the heart that cannot be added up in dollars and cents. There are deeds of love that cannot bt fitted to the ordinary rules of judicious charity. There are sacrifices the grace of which cannot be set down in a bookkeeper's ledger.

Such a deed was that of the woman who an-ointed Jesus with costly oil. We shall call this woman, Mary. Now the behavior Mary (for so tra-dition has named her) was extravagant, not to say indecorous. As Jesus sat eating with his disciples, she broke open a jar of expensive ointment and poured the contents over Jesus' head. The value of this ointment in terms of the purchasing power of modern currency has been placed as high as five hundred dollars. What shocking waste! The dead seemed hopelessly misguided. Yet Jesus remarked with gentleness that she had done a beautiful thing.

Gifts to the Poor

Why beautiful? Because here was revealed the *abandon of worship.* Measured by the practical wis-dom of those who were seated around the table, Mary's act was impetuous nonsense. Granted that she wished to honor Jesus, what less fitting way could she have chosen? Had not Jesus instructed his followers to share their worldly goods with those in need? Was he not himself an example of volun-tary poverty? Was he not sitting at this moment in a poor man's house, eating a poor man's fare? How out of place was this rash deed! The assembled guests looked on with exasperation as the precious oil dripped to the floor. "It might have been sold for three hundred denarii," they lamented, "and the proceeds distributed among the poor."

We have heard that complaint before. Twice I recall taking a friend into the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. On both occasions my companion stiffened up as if to shield himself against the compelling sublimity of the place. Each time I was told in so many words, "very large, and very beautiful indeed. But think of all the money and labor expended here on a mere building, money and labor that could have gone to help the poor." In fact, that is a typical comment of American tourists in Europe. They look upon those mighty architectural achievements erected to the glory of God, and they shake their heads. "What lavish-ness," they exclaim, "When there is so much squal-or all about us."

The Appointed Task

I think I would prefer that we first took care of the poor and then built our cathedrals. Yet, as Jesus said, the hard reality is that the poor are always with us. If all the churches in the world were constructed like garages, it is doubtful that the poor would profit from the money saved thereby. The same tourist who shakes his head at European cathedrals is only too prone to close the door to the naked and hungry who live within their shad-ows. Jesus' friends spoke about what might have been done for the poor. But it is easier to talk than to give. Better the tokens of lavish worship than the empty words of garrulous do-gooders. Better the recklessness of sentiment than the measured stric-tures of practical selfishness.

The Importance of Love

Sometimes the abandon of worship is more prof-itable than the economy of duty. Not even the poor live by bread alone. It is better that the poor man feed his soul on the steeple across the street than that he spend his days with nothing better to look at than row on row of tenements like his own. It was better that Mary honor her Lord with joy while he was still with her than anoint his corpse with regret after he was dead. Mary's act cannot be tested by the ordinary standards of practical goodness. It was an act of worshipful appreciation. It rose out of the fulness of her heart. It poured out of her with the carefree abandon of pure adoration. Her deed needed no justification except her own sincerity. It was a work of art, a thing of beauty.

Mary's deed was beautiful because it expressed

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the intemperance of love; for love has a way of breaking the rules. And in its unlawfulness it is magnificent.

Far be if from me to counsel the careless indulgence of passion. Yet, how gloomy the world would be without love's little excesses! Consider the young man about to buy an engagement ring for his betrothed. His father, a hard-headed fellow, wants to give him some practical advice. "Son," he says, "it's silly to spend several hundred dollars on a diamond ring. If your young lady expects that kind of extravagance, you'd better think twice about this marriage. It would be unfair to her. Later on there will be something she really needs, like a washing machine. And then you won't have the money. Let me give you some advice: get her a zircon. It will only cost a few dollars and nobody will ever know the difference."

Sound advice that. But what does the young man do? He goes out and buys a diamond anyway. And however practical his girl may be, you may be sure of one thing: she wears that ring. As the years go on, she waxes fatter, and the ring pinches her finger. It is a nuisance. But will she take it off?Never! Many is the time she wishes she had the money that went into that diamond. Yet, she will see herself reduced to the depths of poverty before she will part with it. For in the extravagance of the gift is the seal of her husband's love.

The Wisdom of Sacrifice

Who would believe a love that was always judicious? Love's scatterbrained escapades are the common stuff of true affection. Would you censor love's intemperance? Would you sleuth it down? Look under any Christmas tree and there you will spot it. Peer into the package Mr. Jones is carrying home on the evening of his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. There you will catch him with the goods. Listen in on the telephone conversation of a GI overseas, who has squandered his meager savings on a three minute conversation with his family. There is your evidence. Now bring intemperate love into court. You had better be an able prosecutor. No jury in the world is disposed to convict these people. For they are doing beautiful things.

It was this sort of lawless adoration Mary brought to Jesus in her jar of ointment. It touched him deeply. He rebuked those who rebuked her, for there is nothing so pitiful as repudiated generosity. Three hundred denarii! Had he possessed such a sum, Jesus would certainly have given it to the poor. But Mary poured down her whole heart upon his head. The gift was too priceless to refuse.

Mary's deed was beautiful because it showed the abiding wisdom of sacrifice. There is something in extravagant self-denial that puts to shame all purely dutiful philanthropy. There is a power here that binds giver and receiver together. There is a treasure laid up in the memory that far outlives the gift itself.

You remember O Henry's little story, "The Gift of the Magi?" It tells of a poor young couple who lived in a wretched flat. Their possessions were few, but there were two of which they were very proud. One was Jim's gold watch, a family heirloom. The other was Della's long, brown hair.

Christmas was at hand and neither Jim or Del had the means to buy the other a present worth of their devotion. So Della went out and sold h beautiful hair. With the money she received sh bought a platinum fob chain for Jim's watch. Tha evening Jim came home to dinner. He too brough a present. It was a set of jeweled combs for Della hair. To pay for the combs Jim had sold his watc That simple story will abide among the monumen of American literature when many a more polishe tale has been relegated to forgotten archives. Why Because it tells so beautifully the power of sacrifi to outlive the giving and receiving of mere thing

Sacrifice has a wisdom all its own. Prudent hea begrudge the excess, but adoring hearts delight i it. We can imagine what Satan whispered in th ear of Jesus that night in Gethsemane: "This foolishness. The human race is not worth it. L them stew in their own juice. Let them be brough before the bar of judgment and destroyed. Your li is more precious than all the ornery sinners i creation."

That too was sound advice. But Jesus, than God, did not heed it. He gave, he gave extrav gantly; and we remember. We remember because the giving was a power that redeems. We know tha God loves us because "he gave his only begotte Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." By the account book prudence we are not worth it, but by the grace God we are saved.

Here was Mary, foolish Mary. She broke in upo that serious little gathering with the reckless aban don of a worshipful soul. She gave her unneede gift out of the rash intemperance of love. She sa rificed the most precious thing in her possessio She did a beautiful thing. "And truly, I say to yo wherever the gospel is preached in the whole worl what she has done will be told in memory of her

We remember, Mary. Would that our hand might so anoint that brow with beauty! For by ou sins we have encircled it with a crown of thorn

A Poem

On the rebuilding of an old church

Thy planting's set, O Lord, thy sifted seed
Of challenge fell in fertile, waiting soil.
With freshening rain of prayer was the need
Well-watered; then began our earnest toil.
Nurtured by each glad gift of heart or hand,
Of strength or mind, the seed has given birth
To sturdy sapling. In this replenished land
Lies promised yield of even greater worth.
Here, Lord, with humble hearts in this glad hou
We offer this resurgent growth which thrives
And brings us deep assurance that thy power,
When rightly used, can thus renew our lives.
In this old vineyard may we truly be
As consecrated firstfruits unto thee.

KATHERINE L. RAMSDELL

More Than Conquerors

By F. W. Schroeder

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:37.

OUR age has been characterized as an age of anxiety. Supporting evidence is not difficult to nd. More people appear to be going to pieces motionally and morally than in any previous eriod of history. Even ministers are said to be racking up, either because of overwork or unre-olved tensions. And judging by the unusual in-erest in books and magazine articles that promise eace of mind and help to conquer fears and hobias, there must be literally millions who are fraid that they are headed for a crisis that they ay not be able to handle.

Are we to conclude that we in our generation ave more to fear than former generations? Or, lthough we are loathe to admit it, is it possible hat we are not as resourceful and strong as our thers were? Or shall we simply dismiss all the ymptoms of stress and strain by saying that things ren't always as serious as they seem to be? Who an tell! Very likely something can be said for each f these possibilities. However, this much is certain: ll is not well in the city of man-soul. Beneath the acade of confidence and self-reliance one detects races of uneasiness. How many today can really nd truly say: We are more than conquerors?

I

Perhaps we first need to become painfully aware f life's problems and perils before we can join in t. Paul's shout of triumph. Victory cannot be lly appreciated until one has stood on the brink f disaster and defeat. The apostle stood there. Every problem and peril known to man, physical r spiritual, he encountered in some form or other. f the graphic description of his tribulations and nxieties is at all typical of man's predicament, ne can say that the threats to man's security and eace are partly circumstantial, partly existential.

To suffer persecution, to live with a "thorn in he flesh," to know the meaning of famine and nakedness, peril and sword, as St. Paul knew them, is to have a first-hand knowledge of the perils that are encountered in the circumstances of life around us. For most of us these circumstantial perils have been substantially reduced in number and intensity. Except for an occasional outbreak of violence in nature—be it in a cyclone, an earthquake, a flood—we have little to fear from this quarter. Famine and pestilence, winter's biting cold and summer's burning heat cause us little anxiety. While the social order has proved itself to be more intractable than nature in reducing poverty, strife and man's inhumanity to man, considerable progress has been made here too. The law of the jungle has been severely abridged. Personal and property rights are held to be inviolable. To be sure, the threat of war is still with us; and it is more horrible to contemplate than ever before. But barring a holocaust of destruction by atomic weapons 20th century western man can go through life without any serious threats to his well-being from hostile circumstances in nature or history.

But there is another peril with which man must reckon; a peril more serious than any that is purely circumstantial. This peril is existential. This is to say it is rooted in what we are. God-conscious, self-conscious creatures that we are, we have to come to terms with sin and survival. St. Paul seems to have had these existential perils in mind when he spoke of life and death, angels and principalities, things present and things to come, and being separated from the love of Christ. Here we are dealing with something far more ominous than poverty or persecution; here we are face to face with fear and anxieties that are in our very being. These are the real troublemakers. These are the ones that are at the bottom of the great majority of emotional disturbances and moral failures of our time. From these there is no escape. Or is there?

Some people seem to go through life in bovine contentment without ever becoming aware of any such existential perils. I am thinking of those who do not rise very much above the biological order of existence, of those for whom the meaning of life is exhausted when they have enough to eat, a place to sleep, plus a few creature comforts and diversions thrown in for good measure. But does any one get through life without at one time or another looking into the abyss of nothingness or feeling a sense of

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guilt? Is it possible for anyone to become so steeped in sensualism, so morally dull that he does not become aware of the threat of seeming annihilation at the point of death, or if not that, then the peril of an unknown, unknowable future? These were the existential fears that troubled Hamlet when he could not decide whether it is better to be or not to be. Notice the deep anxiety that held him in its grip:

> To die, to sleep;
> To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub:
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause.

In the face of such perilous possibilities, it is indeed difficult to decide whether it is better to bear the ills that are known or to fly to others that are unknown. This is existential anxiety in its most poignant form.

II

How can we deal with these various problems and perils that beset us? Is it possible to dismiss them, to pretend that they are not as serious as they seem to be? Real perils are not apt to be met successfully by this approach. Man's predicament will not be solved by a little dose of sentimental optimism, the power of positive thinking, a little pep talk, or a panacea such as, "Keep your chin up; everything will come out all right." That formula may work when we are dealing with some of the passing threats to our security which have their origin in the circumstances of life; but it will most certainly be found wanting when we come face to face with the existential anxieties of life.

It is at this point that the quacks and cults and all the purveyors of simple solutions to life's problems are so tragically mistaken and at the same time so wantonly cruel to their devotees. Because of an inability or an unwillingness to recognize that many of life's problems are tragically perilous, they offer pleasant opiates instead of real help. An aspirin tablet may have to suffice when we do not know what else to do to alleviate a pain, but it is a poor substitute when radical surgery is necessary. St. Paul's account of his struggles and anxieties makes that very clear. He did not minimize or dismiss the danger to which man's life is exposed; neither did he offer easy solutions.

Realist that he was, he also knew that escape is not the answer; yet escape is the solution that is most frequently sought. It takes on various forms. The most common are dope, drink, and diversions of one kind or another. When these fail, as they inevitably will, one last resort remains—a step into the dark that is assumed to end it all. But even suicide offers no sure escape. Paul Tillich reminds us, "Suicide can liberate one from the anxiety of fate and death—as the Stoics knew. But it cannot liberate from the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, as the Christians know." St. Paul was not intent on finding a way of escape; he wanted to find a way to conquer; and he had discovered it through Him who loves us. Through Him who loves us! This is the key to conquest.

Let this be understood, however; Paul did no consider himself absolved from making any effo in his own behalf. Though he was no advoca of the lift-yourself-by-your-own-boot-straps philo ophy of life, he was not irresponsible in the sen that he expected God to do for him what he cou do for himself. "Every man must bear his ow burden," he wrote to the Galatians. Neither wa Paul a fatalist, meekly accepting whatever migh come his way. How vigorously and effectively h took himself in hand can best be understood fro his words to the Corinthians: "I do not run ain lessly; I do not box as one beating the air; but pommel my body and subdue it." If he did this t bring the vagrant impulses of his body into sub jection, one may assume that he wrestled just a resolutely with his fears and anxieties. Certainl every man is expected to take himself in hand an do for himself whatever is humanly possible. Man circumstantial threats to our security can be re moved by a little ingenuity and effort. Even som of life's deeper fears can be dispelled by an intell gent approach. But self-help alone is not enough.

III

To live triumphantly, to be more than con querors, we will need the help of a power outsid ourselves. The existential anxieties, for instance, ar so much a part of our being that we cannot escap them. No one has yet found a way of jumping ou of his skin. We may not need to live with peopl whom we dislike, but we have to live with ourselves Our spiritual predicament at this point is not unlik the physical predicament in which we find ourselve when we are laid low by an infection. Though th human body has tremendous residual resources o health and healing, a drug needs to be taken o injected to help these residual resources turn th tide of battle from sickness to health. For ou spiritual inadequacy, our moral delinquency, w need the same kind of help. Self-help alone won' do. We need a wisdom and power other than ou own before we can become more than conqueror

James Pike, dean of the Cathedral of St. Joh the Divine, has pointed out that the way to avoi fear and anxiety is to have a single ultimate whic meets four specifications: "It must be genuinel worth while; it must cover the whole of life; must be something to which all other ends can b subordinated; and it must be utterly reliable. What ultimate reality other than the Creator o the world, the God of the patriarchs and prophet the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the sover eign Lord of life and history meets these specifica tions? He is our refuge and strength. Underneat are his everlasting arms. He is present with us at a times and in all places. His love never fails. H mercy knows no limits. Through him, and onl through him who loves us can we be more tha conquerors.

To this we need to add only one further wor and it is primarily a word of caution. We must no make the mistake of thinking of God as a means t an end. God will not be used as a tool. One ca

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Communion Meditation

The Cup of the New Covenant

By Harry M. Buck, Jr.

PAUL reminded the church at Corinth that simply to participate in the service of holy mmunion does not in and of itself insure partici-tion in the body of Christ, nor does it automati-ly make one a citizen of the kingdom of God and e grateful recipient of the grace of the new cove-nt. Then he recalled the tradition he had re-ved of our Lord's words at his final covenant-pper in the upper room on the night in which he s betrayed. Among them the words of our text:

> This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

These words are freighted with meaning. For yone within the Christian tradition, the connota-ns of the words "cup," "covenant," "blood," and en "new" unlock many a gate of memory and call th a flood of associations. The trouble is that ese familiar images may insulate us from the ock of seeing the close juxtaposition of "this p" to "the new covenant," and obscure the char-ter of the cup as the cup of destiny.

The Cup of Destiny

Of course, what we have here are not really the rds of institution but words of administration nected with Paul's instructions to the Corin-an church on how to conduct the sacrament in ich we are participating today. There just is no count of the last supper—a particular meal eaten the Lord with his disciples in the month of san in the year of his death—which does not pre-pose the existence of the Lord's Supper, a reg-r, perhaps weekly, cultic act performed for the ollection of the one whose life had been given for own.

Thus these words were impregnated with pro-nd meaning by the time Paul wrote them, and cup had come to stand for a good deal more n the vessel out of which Jesus of Nazareth nk and which he offered to his companions. kewise, it meant more than the chalice of the haristic feast familiar to Paul and the Corin-an Christians.

For centuries in the scriptures of Israel, the cup l come to stand for destiny, both in a good and in a bad sense, and Jesus himself was shortly to use it with just this meaning. "Father," he said in Gethsemane not many hours later, "let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will but what thou wilt." This cup was to be a cup of utter loneliness and forsakenness, issuing forth in his cry of despair from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"

He mentioned it again shortly after this prayer, when the temple police came to fetch him for a midnight trial and speedy execution. His disciples had armed themselves with swords before going into the garden, and one of them slashed at the ear of one of the officers. Jesus' reply was, "Put your sword into its sheath. The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

There was also the time when James and John, two disciples who should have known Jesus very well, came to ask whether in the forthcoming king-dom of God they could have positions of special honor. Jesus' response was, "Are you able to drink the cup which I must drink?" Their glib and prompt reply, "Yes, of course, we are able . . ." showed that they had the great messianic banquet in mind, while Jesus was speaking of quite a differ-ent kind of cup. James and John, he said, would indeed drink the cup, but even this would not put them next to the throne in the kingdom of God.

Israel's prophets had also talked about divine judgment as a cup of wrath from the hand of the Lord, and the Second Isaiah glories in the knowl-edge that Jerusalem has already "drunk at the Lord's hand the cup of wrath" and atoned for her sins. Christian martyrs sounded the same note and spoke of their death, as Polycarp did, by saying, "I am partaking of the cup of Christ."

And here, in the upper room, the cup of destiny is linked to the new covenant. Jeremiah had seen Israel's destiny as issuing forth in a new covenant, and Deutero-Isaiah sees an ideal age in which God's purpose is consummated. Apocalyptic writers looked forward to the last days. Early Christians made a bold leap as they maintained that these "last days" had come, and that the new age was already here. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, and then after him Paul, insisted that the new had al-ready appeared, as "in Christ, God was reconciling the world unto himself," so that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature the old has passed

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away, behold, the new has come!"

Jesus is not simply another point on the scale of progress, but the crucial point which marks the new beginning in God's dealing with his creation—a totally new era in the execution of God's purposes. Newness involves both a temporal and a qualitative dimension. It is not enough to see a new religion, a new event, or new forms of thought. This is the newness which brings the power of renewal, which issues forth in the new birth and the new being.

The new covenant established by virtue of the blood of Christ and communicated through the sharing of the cup is not just another new religion. It is the strong arm of God reaching down and offering to us the power of renewal at every level of our existence, saying to us, "In Christ, you can be a new creature, and your past frustrations and failures do not need to bind you, for God's new kingdom is within your grasp." The new kingdom does not come with new arguments, but with the power of new life, and the invitation to grasp it—or rather, just to let it grasp you, to participate in it.

To return to our text for a moment, we note the linking of "new covenant" and "cup."

Those who Drink the Cup

"This cup *is* the new covenant." Of course, you say, the cup isn't the covenant. It stands for it; it symbolizes it; and this is true. But still, it is the covenant; it is the means of its communication, and the covenant cannot come to those who are unwilling to participate in it. God shows himself better to those with a certain eager restlessness of spirit than to those whose goal in life is a comfortable security, either in mind or estate.

There seem to be two contradictory urges in the life of the spirit. There is the nest-building habit, which appeals to all of us. We like the warm nest and its security against the storm. We like financial security. But most of all we like emotional security. We do not like to be tossed about on a sea of doubt. We want a faith in which we can confidently believe, and we long for an authority which we can accept, which can resolve our doubts and give us a sure sense of direction. But God seems to keep us on the move, and alongside of what Martin Buber calls the "tradition of habitation," there is the "tradition of the homeless."

The Old Testament is a witness to this constant tension between the home-dweller and the nomad. Even when the ark was settled on Mt. Zion, the staves by which it was to be carried still protruded as a mute witness to the fact that God cannot be bound to his house. The Passover stands as a constant reminder that God's decisive acts of revelation are to a people on the move or ready for it, as year after year the son of the family asks, "What mean you by this service?"

The new covenant is given to the homeless. In fact, Jeremiah's promise of the new covenant went to men in exile, and was not available until the nation had been uprooted. Abraham, father of the faithful, was also one of the fortunate dispossessed.

But the rich young ruler in the New Testam could not enter the kingdom because he insisted taking along too much baggage. On more than occasion, Jesus had to turn aside from men would have followed him only at their own c venience and after they had straightened out their family affairs. It was in this context t Jesus said, "Foxes have holes. The birds of the have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to his head."

The gospel is addressed to the dispossessed, by this I do not necessarily mean the economica poor. In the final analysis, the worship of mamm does not depend on how much or how little of t world's goods you have, for the poor man who " plenty o' nothin' " may be just as much the slave things as the rich man who "got a lock on door."

The only man who is ever really in danger being excluded from God's kingdom is the one w no longer has a sense of need, the one for wh all things have been accomplished—the one who perfectly comfortable in his little nest and satisf with his faith as he has it. He has need of nothi and with no appetite, it's hard to eat.

The new covenant, I say, comes only to th with enough eagerness of spirit to be pilgrims, th who will have no gods but God. The Christian l then, cannot be one grand and glorious decision a transformation, for it is not a step but a stea walk. The pilgrim path is stony and thorny, a the tenderfoot dreads it. When your feet tougher, you would be found nowhere else.

It is significant that the Sermon on the Mount the constitution of the kingdom of God, as it w —reaches a climax on these words:

> No one can serve two masters; for either he will h the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both G and your property. Therefore, I tell you, do not be a ious about your life, what you shall eat or what you sh drink, nor about your body, what you shall wear. Is life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Of course we like to eat, and who wouldn't like new suit or a new dress? And the Sermon on t Mount does not go off on a tangent of otherwor liness and maintain that these things are usele Rather it says, "Your heavenly Father knows th you need them all." As your employer it is his ta to provide what you need to carry on his work. B you must "seek first his kingdom and righteousne and all these things (that is your needs) will provided." As one of the most ancient manuscr witnesses to this text has the passage, "Set yo zeal first of all upon righteousness and his kingdo and all these things will be provided for you."

Accepting His Destiny

But we can go even further in understanding command to drink of the Lord's Cup. It is sign cant that in the Fourth Gospel there is no accou of the institution of the sacrament of the Lor Supper. In its place, where chronologically it ou to come, there is the scene of Jesus washing

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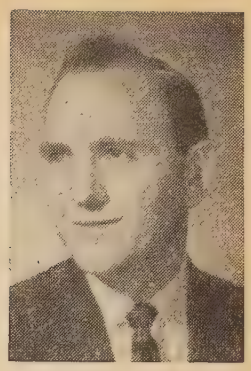

How to Lose Your Religion!

By James I. Spainhower

Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?—Jeremiah 8:5

IN reference to the Hebrew nation, the prophet Jeremiah could not understand why his people were continually lapsing morally in the practice of their faith. It was a puzzle to him why so many of them had lost their religion. In wonderment he asked: "Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?"

Jeremiah's concern puts before us the valid question: Why do people lose their religion? What is it that causes them to slide backward, to cease to practice what they once professed, or still profess, believe. A major problem of any concerned Christian fellowship is what to do about those of the fellowship who no longer seem to possess any real religious concern.

There is no shortage of advice in this world on how to find religion, but even with all this advice, many still don't find religion. It occurs to me that a different approach might be refreshing as well as helpful. Maybe we can find religion if we consider how to lose it!

An Intellectual Football

One good way to lose one's religion is to make an intellectual football out of it. Get together with your friends to kick around a few religious ideas. Insist that the most important thing in all the world is to have a highly intellectualized approach to the simple teachings of Jesus Christ. Become an intellectual snob when in the presence of people whose scholarly background in the faith is poor—even if their practice of its precepts is outstanding. On the other hand, we can lose our religion by putting it in an intellectual vacuum. To lose our religion in this way, we need to become the sort of person who exclaims with a marked air of superiority, "*I've* found out all the truth . . . here it is, what I believe . . . now I can quit *thinking*." Keep believing that you have it all, and that all others are lost, and that God's revelation to you has been given once and for all. Never lower yourself into thinking about the validity of the other world religions . . . or about the validity of the approach of other communions to the truth about God and the universe; you might get confused. Be content with whatever knowledge you have and ridicule any who would seek a deeper understanding of the religion of others.

We can also lose our religion by making it a social play thing. Consider your church membership as membership in another club that demands a part of your busy life. Pay your dues, instead of tithing your income. Seek to have a respectable attendance record at the services of the church, so that the other members of this club will think you are very interested in its affairs. Get all involved in the church's organizational life; you can have a good time running yourself frantic trying to keep up with all its activities. As a matter of fact, when things don't seem to be going right, insist that a new committee or organization within the church be established. Never insist that a more spiritual and less social attitude on the part of the members might greatly improve the effectiveness of the present organization. Remember that working in the church can be great fun and sport . . . that the church can be a lovely play thing that can help you to lose your religion.

Some have been notably successful in losing their religion by putting it in a compartment, and taking it out only on Sunday. This doesn't require too much practice and might appeal to you. All you need to do is to tell yourself . . . and others . . . that one is never to mix religion and politics. This can easily be justified by recalling that Jesus was neither a Democrat nor a Republican. Besides, politics can get dirty and you can keep reminding yourself that cleanliness is next to Godliness!

Compartmentalized Religion

A further method that is helpful in keeping your religion in a compartment is never to mix it with your economic affairs. When you go to work on Monday don't be bothered with taking your Christian teachings with you, for they can easily get in your way and cause you to keep your religion. Fall right in with the line put forth by many successful people that the important thing is to get ahead—at any cost.

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Then too, it's important to criticize those who would mix religion and world affairs. Keep telling yourself and others that the things Jesus taught were beautiful and are lovely to read, but that when it comes to applying them to the relations among nations they just don't fit. After all, if you say it and I say it, and we can say it often enough to enough people, we can eventually be very successful in keeping any Christian consideration from ever entering our legislative halls or the chambers where diplomats discuss world relations.

Another good way to lose your religion is to be exceedingly wise in the use of your time. Keep telling yourself that you are a busy man and that your time is very valuable. Don't let any of the church leaders fool you into thinking that you ought to put the church first on your schedule. Be too busy with all your many worthwhile activities to accept religious responsibilities in the church. It usually isn't too difficult to give a religious twist to the things that take up so much of our time that we can't accept religious responsibilities in the church. Wise people become very proficient in the art of the religious twist because even wise people have a conscience. It is a further evidence of your wisdom to protect that conscience from a feeling of guilt because of refusal to accept church responsibilities.

If you want to get real wise, become a come-to-church-on-Sunday Christian; then you can always say, "Well, I may not do much in the church, but you can always count on me being in my place on Sunday." And then, if you want to be particularly wise, you can cinch your statement with, "And that's more than you can say for most church members," because it really is more than you can say for most church members!

Other people have found particular success in becoming a come-to-Church-on-Sunday-when-I-don't-have-anything-else-to-do Christian. This is an even better way to lose your religion for if you go every Sunday, even if only for the purpose of protecting yourself from criticism, you might be touched by the Spirit of God, or by something the preacher might stumble over and say, or by some phrase in a hymn, or by some portion of scripture. There is always the danger that you might be so touched that you will start to gain religion instead of losing it. The safest and wisest thing is to go to church only when you don't have anything else to do, for then religion can never get a hold on you.

Others lose their religion by persistently telling themselves that they have no time to develop their spiritual life, because it is more important to develop other areas of their personality. By refusing to develop their spiritual life, they cut themselves off from any real contact with God, and the chance of their being touched by his Spirit is greatly decreased. This has such an unspiritual effect on one's life that if one can also be eminently successful at the same time, then one can keep others from seeing any good in religion, and the chances of our being touched by real religion is even less. Here is the reasoning: If we can be real successful without religion, others will say that religion must not make much difference. If we can get enough people feeling that way, the chances of organized religion ge ting strong enough to touch us or any other peopl is made very small.

A Final Suggestion

A final way to lose your religion is never to l it make a fool of you. In our society, it is all rig to be nice and to go to church; that is social acceptable and causes people to think well of yo But never let your religion cause you to do a foo ish thing like deciding to tithe your income b cause of your gratitude to God for his goodness you. Keep telling yourself that all this talk tithing is just a fast scheme the preachers ha worked out to get their salaries raised! Never b come so foolish that you volunteer to sponsor o of the church's youth groups. After all, only a fo would go down to the church every Sunday nig

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Pastoral Prayer

O THOU Spirit of the living God, unseen y everywhere, do thou find some open door in the quiet of our souls. As thou dost come, may w let thy presence work a redeeming difference in u

We confess that too commonly we have love darkness rather than light: We have deliberatel chosen evil in the face of good; we have surrendere to the enticements of the world and rejected th imperishable values of the spirit. We have been poo soil in which thy truth could grow, and we ha given weak expression to thy way of life. The com ing of thy kingdom tarries long because of ou slothfulness. As we now surrender ourselves to the do thou take new possession of us that under th leadership a better chapter may be written in ou lives' story.

May we come to know the folly of becoming busy and over-scheduled that our inner lives go un cared for and become filled with worthless thing when they could be managed as a priceless posse sion where the best is to be established and nu tured.

Let thy possession of us lead us to abhor a li that is without purpose and an outlook that do not comprehend service. Challenge us today wit the possibility that waits on our doorsill, to equi the Church better to feed the souls of men.

May this hour of worship bring us so close t Jesus that, seeing the contrast between his dept and our shallowness, we may be done with less things, and rising up and following him, may som one's sorrow be lessened, someone's burden ligh ened, someone's appreciations refined, someone temptation conquered, someone's spiritual compa ionship made vital.

For the sake of thy kingdom in us and throug us to a needy world. Amen.—*Russell Van Ale First Methodist Church, Arcata, California.*

eaching the Barrier
tween God and Man

Listening to God

By Gordon Poteat

N these days of extraordinary airplane speed, we hear a great deal about crashing the sound bar-. But the penetration of another barrier, the rier of the great silence that surrounds God, has n and is still a perennial human quest. Because d is intangible, inaudible, invisible, not evident our physical senses, the atheist denies his exis-ce. We who reject the atheist's negation, because cannot believe that the universe which produced nd is mindless are often challenged: "Does God r answer your prayers? How can you be sure t prayer is not simply auto-suggestion and that er all is said and done you are just talking to urself?"

Begging this question for the moment, let us rec-nize that man has always been intrigued by the at silence that surrounds God, and down through ages has sought to penetrate the barrier that arates the seen and the unseen. The ancient eeks relied upon oracles who phrased their advice riddles. Other ancient peoples used divination, metimes by astrology, sometimes through cutting n the bodies of animals and reading the entrails. ere were those who went into trancelike states l later reported commerce with God. Even today re are those who sit in a darkened room, hands stretched upon a table, trying to penetrate the rier through the medium of a person who claims power to communicate with the other world. ese are just a few of the age-old and often hetic attempts to reach the unseen.

The Prophets

When we turn to the Bible we find that the bar- is breached time and again. God walks in the den and talks with Adam and Eve. Moses in the derness saw a burning bush and heard the voice God. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah the prophet s us that while in the temple he heard a voice n out of heaven saying, "Whom shall I send and will go for us?" This was a common enough erience of the men who are called prophets. emiah begins his prophesy by saying: "The word he Lord came unto me." Amos cries: "When the Lord speaks who can but prophesy." Such examples are frequent in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament at the time of Jesus' baptism the heavens were opened and a voice came, saying, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Virtually the same words are heard again at the transfiguration. On the Damascus road Paul hears the voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And Peter hears the voice of God in a dream.

These are all familiar incidents from the Bible. But what do they mean to you and me today? Even if all of these things actually happened in Bible times, it would seem that the curtain has fallen and we are not able to pentrate it. Can it be that God has stopped speaking to man? Since Bible times there have been those who have declared that they have heard the voice of God. But no doubt they were unique saints and not at all like us ordinary folk. Is the barrier penetrable today? Can we hear God speak to us?

Does God Speak?

We are not interested simply in stories of the past, or in the experience of other people, no matter how fascinating they may be. We want to know whether we can have contact with the unseen. We want to know whether God listens to us and speaks to us. We want assurance that we can be guided in our everyday affairs by his hand, for unless we have that assurance our religion has little vitality or meaning. Religion is essentially prayer and communion with God, and unless we can have contact with God ourselves, today, how can we gain anything of particular value by reading about the experiences of others?

Is not this your question and mine? We want to know whether God speaks to man and if so whether we can hear his voice. Before we enter into the exploration of these matters, we need to ask ourselves a very serious question: If we *can* hear God's voice, do we really *want* to hear it? Do we *dare* listen?

The question is fraught with implications and responsibility. Let us turn to the story of Jesus' transfiguration. Surely, if Jesus is really our example, if his experiences have significance for us, the answer to this question lies right there.

For two years prior to the transfiguration Jesus had gone up and down the land teaching the peo-

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ple. Yet as he moved around the country he discovered that the established religious leaders resenting his trespassing on their prerogatives, resented his interpretations of the scriptures, resented his dismissal of certain traditions because he considered them trivial. This opposition grew as the days went by. Finally he took his disciples aside and put two questions to them: " Who do men say that I am? Who do *you* say that I am?" Peter answered for the group: "We believe that you are God's annointed one, the Messiah."

Jesus then went on to tell them that if he went forward in his mission, forward to Jerusalem, opposition would solidify and lead inevitably to his death. At once Peter objected: "Why do you want to go to Jerusalem and be killed. Stay here and save your life." But Jesus answered: "Get behind me Satan. You are not talking from God's point of view, but from man's." Self preservation is the first law of nature, but God's great law is self sacrifice. If we listen to God, if we really hear him, this is one of the things we must be prepared to hear.

On the Mountain

Eight days later Jesus took three of his disciples and went up on the mountain to pray. What was he praying about? He was praying about the terrific responsibility that God had placed upon him. As he prayed, his disciples became aware that something great was happening. Jesus' face shone and at that moment came a voice from heaven: "This is my chosen one; listen to him." This brought Jesus a tremendous assurance, a confirmation of the purpose that God had put in his heart. Shortly thereafter Jesus and his disciples descended to the valley to carry God's mission. Action followed revelation.

Does this story mean anything to us today? Certainly there are elements in it that are strange, but there are meanings applicable to our experience. If we dare to listen to God, there are three conditions that are essential, if we are to hear his voice. First of all we must turn away from self and self interest. So much of our praying is concerned with whether God will listen to us and to our requests. We need to be patient, do less talking and more listening. That is the first condition: We must be willing, as Jesus was, to turn away from ourselves.

The second condition is that while we should be ready to consider other people's opinions about matters that we must decide, we must never be controlled by them. Just as Jesus refused to be controlled by the opinions of his good friend Peter, so must we listen to God and not man. This is the point of James Russell Lowell's poem which ends:

> They are slaves who will not choose,
> Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
> Rather than in silence shrink
> From the truth they needs must think.

How often have individuals who were convinced that God was speaking to them had to stand alone and be persecuted by their contemporaries because they dared to listen to the voice of God.

The final condition is obedience. We follow to obey. We cannot know God or hear his voice unless, like Samuel, we are ready to say: "Spe Lord; thy servant heareth." Any hesitation sh off the sound of God's voice. Penetrating the sile that surrounds God cannot be a matter of i curiosity; an exercise in occultism. Nor can it b desire to belong to the elite, like the gnostics w feel they are different from other people beca God has favored them above all others. All su pride and curiosity must be eliminated from soul if one is to hear God. Obedience, willingne humility, these are the conditions we must meet.

This Is the Way

Let us remember that God speaks to us in dive ways. He speaks sometimes in the challenge o moral decision we must make. Perhaps we tempted to dodge a moral decision because to ma it would be inconvenient or bad for our caree Such a decision may be the voice of God sayi "This is the way; walk ye in it." If we refuse walk in the way we cut off our communication w God.

Sometimes the voice of God comes to us in a ne to be met, a human being who is in distress; so times in a verse that strikes home as we read Bible. Often God's voice is mediated through Je Christ in the words he spoke long ago but wh still have power to reach our consciences. An hymn suggests the patience and attention wh must be given:

> Take time to be holy,
> Speak oft with the Lord;
> Abide in him always
> And feed on his word.

To Lose

(Continued from page 22)

of the year to try to cope with the involved pr lems of youth.

Out in the world, when someone starts to critic the church, join in the criticism, for only a f would try and defend such an imperfect organi tion as the church. You can soothe your conscie by telling yourself that by joining in with th who are critical of the church you will eventua win their friendship and then, like a knight in sh ing armor, you can win them to the church. Ne be so foolish as to stick up for what seems to right when everyone else thinks otherwise. K telling yourself that you are being expedient, t after all, successful living requires a certain amo of compromise, that eventually, when the time place is just right, you'll witness to your religio

From this discussion we can see that Jerem asked a valid question, "Why do people turn a in perpetual backsliding, why do they lose t religion?" The answer to Jeremiah's question "Because they know how to lose their religio Do we know how to lose our religion, or do know how to keep it?

Covenant

(Continued from page 20)

iples' feet. That John was not unaware of the tence of the rite is seen in Chapter 6, where delivers a profound communion sermon, having us say, "Whoever lives on my flesh and drinks blood remains united to me and I remain united im. . . . My flesh is real food and my blood is drink."

Covenant of Service

ut you can't leave it on this mystical—and, you st admit, rather comfortable—plane. The scene n chose to describe was not the banquet but the on to Jesus in a covenant of service; yes, lowly ice and frequently uninspired drudgery that little of the emotional uplift of a lovely sacra- nt. Jesus was on his way to the cross, and the of the cross is far more than the way of being d, adhering to the laws of customary morality, ying the Ten Commandments and keeping out ail. In fact, it has so little to do with the ordi- y standards of goodness that Jesus was "num- ed among the transgressors" and crucified be- en two thieves on a charge of conspiring to ch and advocate the overthrow of the govern- nt by force and violence.

The new covenant is entered into by those cour- ous men and women who will accept that des- for themselves as well, and unite their destinies his. And his kingdom will be established, "Not h swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring ms," but by the loyalty of his followers who take message to heart and act upon it. The leap of h is a leap of action. Abraham was the father of faithful, not because he accepted the correct trine in spite of the evidence, but because he ck out into the unknown in spite of the diffi- ties, or as the author of the Epistle to the He- ws put it, "When he was called . . . he went out knowing where he was going. . . . By faith he ourned . . . living in tents. . . . For he looked ward to a city . . . whose builder and maker is d."

Restlessness and Loyalty

Religion ought to involve security and finality, the Christian faith gives neither of these, at st not easily. Instead it imparts a constant rest- ness and a loyalty that knows no holidays. e Job we would like a simple explanation of our and we would gladly accept even Eliphaz' in- ts if only we could believe them. When Eliphaz s Job, "Isn't your religion your confidence and integrity of your ways your hope?" most of us wer back, "I wish it were."

We live in an age when religion is popular, but religion which is most marketable at the mo- nt is the vague religiosity of sociability that be- gs to a forward-looking world. It produces the kind of man who, in Gardner Murphey's description, is guided by a kind of built-in radar apparatus which receives signals from his immediate social group and adjusts him automatically to the situation. Such a man dare not take a stand, for this would make him stand out of line, and prevent him from hiding behind his suit of charcoal grey conformity. This kind of religion, which has many ardent champions today, is a safe affiliation that gives a sense of stability and, above all, respectability.

What I am talking about has very little to do with religion at all, for the new covenant in Christ's blood is not simply a new religion competing with the many other religions in the world. It is neither a social tonic nor a cheap sedative. Rather, it is a new action of God in human history, which produces new creatures. I am talking about drinking the communion cup of the new covenant, which means to make God's purposes our purposes in a redemptive fellowship of imperfect people on a plane where the goal is rarely in sight.

Poor Travelers

The trouble is that most of us are poor travelers. We are anxious for the end of the journey, and since we can't see the end, we are tempted either to say that there is no end, or else to choose some milepost along the way as the goal. To be sure, we need lesser loyalties, for you can't suddenly arrive at a final destination without heading for temporary destinations first, but on the whole this is not our problem. Our problem is the tendency to substitute a partial loyalty for the ultimate loyalty. We must beware of trying to solve our problems by some sort of premature commitment, for the attachments of the pilgrim are temporary, even if real. The danger is that we shall substitute religion and religious activity for God as he is revealed in Christ Jesus.

God is greater than all of the means whereby he makes himself known, and as we take the cup of the new covenant and drink in his recollection, let us look beyond the form and symbol of this act to the God who can meet us here, and wherever else we choose to allow him to lay hold of us.

Conquerors

(Continued from page 18)

hardly approve of trying religion as a last resort when everything else has failed. Religion must be embraced for its own sake. God is to be worshipped and served because he is God. "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever," the Westminster catechism reminds us. Let it be man's chief concern to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, then all things necessary to his wellbeing, including peace of mind and triumph over fear and anxiety, will be added to him. This is the way to become more than conquerors.

Memo

(Continued from page 3)

though he be for himself able, that delivers not me, if I have been no instrument for the doing of it. Many, many burdens lie upon this calling, upon this marriage; but our *recompense* is, that marriage is as well an hourable as a painefull calling.

Husbands of Churches

So then the interest of your *particular Minister*, and the particular Church, being such as between *Man* and *Wife, a marriage*, we consider the uses of marriage in Gods first intention, and apply them to this marriage. Gods first intentions in marriage were two. *In adjutorium*, for mutuall helpers, and *in prolem*, for procreation, and education of Children. For both these are we made Husbands of Churches; *In prolem*, to assist in the *regeneration of Children*, for the inheritance of Heaven; and *in adjutorium*, to be helpers to one another. And there if the husband, the Pastor, put the wife, his flock in a *Circumcision*, to pare themselves to the quick, to take from their necessary means to sustain their families, to satisfie him; the wife will say as *Zipporah* said to *Moses, Sponsus sanguinum, a bloody husband art thou*, that exactest and extortest more than is due. In that case the Hsuband is no *helper.* But if we be alwayes ready to help your children over the threshold . . . always ready to *Baptize* the Children; if we be alwayes ready to help you in all your *spiritual diseases*, to that *Cordiall*, that *Balsamum*, the *body and bloud of Christ Jesus;* If we be alwayes ready to help you in all your *bodily distresses*, ready even at your last gasp to open your eyes then, when your best friends are ready to close them; ready to deliver your souls into the hands of God, when all the rest about you are ready to receive into their hands, that which you leave behinde you, and then ready to lay up the *garments* of your *soules*, your bodies, in the *wardrobe* the *grave*, till you call for them, and put them on again, in the resurrection, then are we truely *helpers*, true husbands . . . In a word, if he presse too much, if she withdraw too much, this frustrates Gods purpose in making that a marriage; they are not mutuall helpers to one another. These were Gods principall intentions in marriage, *in adjutorium, in prolem.* But then mans fall induced a third, *in remedium*, That for a remedy against burning, and to avoid fornication, every man should have his own wife, every woman her own husband. And so in remedium, for a remedy against *spirituall fornication*, of running after *other men* in other places, out of disaffection to their own Pastor, or over affecting another, God hath given every wife, her own husband, Every Church her own Pastor. And to all these purposes, our function is a marriage . . . In this *spirituall procreation* of children, we all dye without children *of our own;* Though by our labours, when God blesses them, you become children, yet you are *God's children*, not *ours;* w *nurse* you by his words, but his *Spirit begets yo by the same word;* we must not challenge to u that which God onely can doe.

Foster Father

The minister should claime no children, no spiri uall children of his own begetting; not to attribut to *himself* that holy generation of the Saints God, as though his learning, or his wit, or his l bour, had saved them; but to content himselfe t have been the *foster father*, and to have nurse those children, whom the Spirit of God, by ove shadowing the Church, hath begot upon her, fo though it be with the word of truth, in our preach ing, yet of *his own will begot he us*, though *by th word*, says the Apostle. Saint *Paul* might say to th *Corinthians, Though you have tenne thousand in structors in Christ, yet have yee not many father for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through th Gospel* . . . Those, to whom *he first of any* presente the Gospel. That had not heard of a *Christ*, nor *holy Ghost*, before, They, into whom, he infused new religion, new to *them*, might well enough be called his children, and hee their father; But *w* have *no new* doctrine to present, no new opinion t infuse, or *miracles* to amaze, as in the Roman Church, they are full of all these: wee have no chil dren to beget of our own: *Paul was not crucifie for you, nor were you baptized in the name of Pau* sayes *Paul* himself; as he sayes again, *who is Paul but a Minister by whom ye beleeved*, and that als not by him, but *as the Lord gave to every man* Not as *Paul* preached to every man, for he preache alike to every man; but as the Lord gave to ever man; *I have planted*, says he, it is true, but *he tha planteth is nothing*, says he also; Only they tha proceed, as they proceed in the Romane Church *E opere operato*, to tye the grace of God, to the ac tion of the man, will venter to call Gods children *their* children in that sense. My prayer shal b against that communication, That God will no *give us a miscarrying womb*, nor *dry breasts;* tha you may always suck pure milk from us, and the not cast it up, but digest it, to your spiritual growth; And I shall call upon God with a holy pas sion . . . That God would give me children, but *hi* children . . . that so being begot by himselfe, th father of life, and of light, you may be *nursed*, an brought up, in his service by *me*. That so, not at tributing the work to *any man*, but to Gods Ordi nances, you doe not tye the power of God, nor th breath of life, to any one mans lips, as though there were no regeneration, no begetting, but by *him;* bu acknowledging the other to be but an *instrument* and the weakest to be *that*, you may remembe also, That though a man can cut deeper with a Axe, then with a knife, with a heavy, then with a lighter instrument; yet God can pierce as far into a conscience, by a plain, as by an exquisite speaker

* * *

God hath set our eyes in our foreheads, to loo forward, not backward, not to be proud of tha which we have done, but diligent in that whic are to doe.

Professor of Speech
eaks His Mind

Why Is So Much Preaching So Bad?

By Charles Daniel Smith

HE remarkable increase in church ttendance during the last decade become a commonplace by now. ly never before has the ministry so challenged to help us discover urces to stand in a world that atens to beat us down or, beyond to help us achieve self-mastery direction for triumphant living.

ven in the liturgical churches, y members look to the sermon as part of the service which can help most, and they are gratified if it s them at all. But, after visiting dreds of churches during the past ty years, I conclude that congre-ons are often frustrated and dis-ointed by the sermon because (to it bluntly) most clergymen are not passably decent public speakers. I ot mean by this that their voices npleasant, their enunciation indis-, their grammar incorrect, or their bularies meager. I do mean that oo often they have not found, or-zed, or presented worthwhile ideas clear, interesting, and inspiring ner.

hile reading a special issue of ech *Monographs* (XXII, No. 4,), which lists works on preaching the sixteenth century to the pres-I was impressed by the number of s clergymen themselves criticized ent pulpit speaking. The most tive preachers are often the most poken critics of sermons perpe-ed by their least effective col-ues. Even as long ago as 1928, ry Emerson Fosdick declared in *per's Magazine*: "There is no rea-why we should not have much er preaching than we ordinarily

Difficult Goals

ctually, there are several reasons sermons are not better than they erally are — reasons, incidentally, which the preacher has little or control. His goals are difficult to in. He is often overworked attend-to pastoral duties. And, perhaps the t important reason of all, his speech ning in the seminary was probably lequate.

Those who make New Year's resolutions know how slowly and with what difficulty self-mastery proceeds. Some clergymen set goals which are unattainable because they are unnecessarily abstract: "right living," "advancing the kingdom of God," etc., and thus they frustrate their congregations who often have no idea what the objective is or what they can do about it. The people in the pews gain only a vague and uncomfortable feeling that they fail, in some uncertain way, to measure up. On the other hand, some ministers habitually scold their congregations in the most specific terms and then express surprise that so many members stay away from church. The pulpit calls for leadership of the highest order, for its occupant must so capture the imaginations of his listeners that they will be stirred and challenged to discover for themselves and put to full use the resources of religion.

The lawyer asks for a verdict and the politician for a vote, but the preacher's goals, partly because of their intangibility, are most difficult to attain. In the process, he must speak to the same people again and again on age-old subjects that can easily become hackneyed unless they are handled with freshness and imagination. In the amount of sheer wordage expected of him each week, he must surpass by far the output of most lay speakers. No wonder, then, if he is not always at his best. Although there is little that we can do to reduce the difficulty of his task, we can remove two of his greatest handicaps by reducing the work of the pastorate to a reasonable amount and by giving him better speech training than he now is getting.

Too Many Duties

An Episcopal rector once told me that board meetings, choir practice, visiting the sick, personal counseling, marriages, funerals, and Boy Scout meeting made such brutal demands on him that there was little time left for reading, conversing, and thinking. When he got around to preparing his sermon (usually late Saturday evening), he brewed a pot of coffee to help him keep awake and worked on his manuscript most of the night. All too often his sermon turned out, as he put it, "old stuff patched up." Some of his pastoral functions he would not have delegated if he could, but he wondered if others might not be performed at least as adequately by laymen in his church.

A congregation that wants better preaching than it is getting might well begin by abolishing any notion it may have that its pastor leads a leisurely life. If most of the responsibility for church business, for instance, cannot be taken off his shoulders, he will be less able to perform adequately his most important functions: reading, conversing with thoughtful people, or just thinking in his hammock under the apple tree. He must escape now and then for awhile the network of the trivial. He must now and then in the presence of God brood over the needs of each member of his congregation and through this form of prayer hope to give him once a week, year after year, something fresh, inspiring, and—above all—worthwhile.

A well filled mind, a well disposed heart, and a sturdy sense of purpose are, however—perhaps unfortunately—no guarantee of clear and effective sermons. Ideas must be so managed that they will achieve the purpose for which they were intended. This is the main concern of the art of public speaking, a term I use reluctantly for fear that it may be misunderstood to mean the use of fine language or the manipulation of the voice. Let me repeat that I mean by public speaking the art of *managing ideas*: finding, organizing, and presenting them in a clear and interesting manner, a study, incidentally, that will reward with increased power anyone who will devote to it for a few months the same energy and attention that he gives to his specialty. Some may rationalize that because falsehood is often presented with great skill, that the truth should make its way unaided, but I think that Jesus of Nazareth, St. Paul St. Augustine, or any other consummate preacher would not agree.

No Formal Training

Most men in the pulpit, unfortunately, have never had the kind of training now being offered by many university departments of public address. John L. Casteel reported a study in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* for February, 1945, in which he had surveyed a group of sixty ministers and found that almost three-fourths had had no public speaking training of any

ARLES D. SMITH, *an Episcopalian nan, it assistant professor in the lic address department, School of ech and Dramatic Art, Syracuse versity.*

sort, either in college or in the seminary. The quality of preaching done by the younger men, at least, would increase markedly within the next decade if the seminaries were to establish as one of the prerequisites for admission adequate training in a recognized university department of public address, including, in addition to fundamentals of public speaking, courses in exposition, group discussion, conference leadership, parliamentary procedure, and interviewing. In this atmosphere, the pre-ministerial student would learn to adapt to his fellow classmates, the kind of heterogeneous audience, incidentally, that he will address later on when he stands in the pulpit. He also needs the kind of experience provided by university student speakers' bureaus, from which he would be sent to talk to service clubs, women's organizations, political groups—in short, to anyone who wants to hear him talk on any subject within the range of his interest and preparation. Not until he becomes competent in meeting various kinds of audiences and in holding their interest and respect should he begin his professional training. A broad liberal arts background with emphasis on skill in the communication of worthwhile ideas should be a prerequisite to matriculation in the seminary.

Until quite recently the notion has persisted in the seminaries that anyone who could preach effectively himself could teach others to preach. The Reverend George V. McCabe, S.J., who surveyed 162 Roman Catrolic seminaries in 1949, discovered only nine teachers with graduate degrees in speech. By checking faculty listings in Protestant seminary catalogues, I have discovered that the lack of qualified speech teachers there is almost as profound. Still another deficiency revealed by the McCabe survey and the testimony of Protestant ministers is that most public speaking teachers in the seminaries are first of all teachers of something else. During the past ten or fifteen years, the administrators have become somewhat more aware that teachers of public speaking require the same careful training required for teachers of other subjects, and it is no longer a novelty at the conventions to see job interviews taking place between "scouts" from the better seminaries and men with the Ph.D. degree in public address.

A Sign of Hope

W. C. Craig, chairman of a committee to investigate speech education in the seminaries, reported to the Speech Association of America in 1946 that those instructors who had had the most training in public speaking were voicing the greatest dissatisfaction with teaching in their departments. This hopeful sign indicates that the solution at least partially depends on the administrators' ability to translate that awareness into constructive action. I am sure that the problem has long since been solved by some of the seminaries, that others are well on their way, and that beginnings are being made in many more. There is reason to believe that the quality of preaching will improve during the next twenty-five years except for those ministers already in the pulpit whose effectiveness is below their potential.

This concluding paragraph I should like to address to them. Although some of the great speakers of the past, Cicero for example, have recommended that any serious student of the art might profitably devote a lifetime to it, the fact is that considerable progress can be made in a semester's time provided only that the instructor knows his business and that the student diligently prepares each assignment. Those of who have taught public speaking mature adults for any length of tir through university extension class have ceased to be amazed at the in provement they almost invariabl achieve in their ability to communica their ideas. During the ten years th I have been teaching, however, I ha had only one minister as a student an evening class. I regret that I ha not had more because he told me befo the course was half over that his co gregation had already recognized a appreciated his increased ability in t pulpit.

Review

Preachers and Books

THE DIMENSION OF DEPTH. *By Edwin McNeill Poteat. Harper. $2.00.*

The late Edwin McNeill Poteat found in the crises of the last weeks of Jesus' ministry, when the crowds fell away, insights into the deepest meaning of the gospel that resulted in his "Parables of Crisis," "These Shared His Passion," "These Shared His Cross" and "These Shared His Power." This, his last book, again surveys the fateful weeks leading up to the cross and resurrection.

For the sequence of events Poteat follows James Moffatt's well-known "Everyman's Life of Jesus." The study is divided into three parts: Jesus Sees Himself in the Dimension of Depth; Discipleship Seen in the Dimension of Depth; and Life's Crises in the Dimension of Depth.

The author means by the dimension of depth the identification of self with God. This, he insists, does not mean self-deification. But the only justification for man's believing in himself is in his ability to identify himself with God. The author considers that a logical extension of Jesus' identification of himself with God is for the disciple of Christ to do the same. Jesus said ,"You believe in God; believe also in me." Poteat reasons that we should go on to say, "You believe in God; believe also in man."

However the self in which one can believe is the self who penetrates to the depth of his being where he is not swayed by the common sense of the world but by the Cross which he increasingly experiences to be the wisdom of God and the power of God.

The author who died soon after completing this manuscript deals with death in the final pages. "One cannot know death," he wrote, "until after one has died. . . . What we do know, however, is that the resurrection witness was not merely the word of victory over death, it was the triumph of life." *—Hampton Adams, Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, N. Y.*

GROUND TO STAND ON. *By John E Otwell. Oxford. $4.25.*

The temptation on reading this boo is to begin immediately to quarrel wit the author's conclusions about the n ture of the Christian faith. Profess Otwell's aim is to speak to the religiou skeptic, seeking to convince him of th claims of the Christian faith—as interprets these claims. His credentia in undertaking such a project are th he was once numbered among the skep tics.

The book is divided into three se tions, "The Quest for Truth," "Bas Christian Beliefs," and "The Practic of the Christian Life." In the first se tion the author dealt with intellectu and emotional arguments for God. H deals at length with tests of the validit of experience, and then applies these t the question, "Is Christianity true? Arguments from "dogmatic assuranc and scripture," are basically rejecte because "they do not answer the prob lems posed by the questioner simpl because these questions have no realit for the Christian himself." Argument from "scientific analogy" and "desir ability" are not valid because essen tially they are not "proofs."

"At some stage in his pilgrimage however, the skeptic is likely to ceas asking for proofs of the whole of Chris tianity and begin attempting to find it essential, irreducible core," says Ot well. The only valid reduction, accord ing to the author, is experience whic is tested by the criteria of stability creativity, recurrence, and coherence This experience, Professor Otwell de scribes as the "encounter," "a vivi certainty of the reality of a tremen dous 'something.' "

From this background the autho then discusses basic Christian belief —God, man, and Jesus Christ. In thi section he develops his basic theologi cal argument: God is necessary to th Christian faith; man is a sinner wh can be redeemed; and Jesus was "God-filled man before whom (we

; kneel in contrite humility and
tion."
ıe "practice of the Christian life"
e focus of the concluding section
ıe book. In it the author discusses
heory of Christian witness under
ıeading of "the will of God," "the
stian community" and "trans-
ıed men."
ven at this point I shall refrain
criticizing Dr. Otwell's conclu-
s. One cannot refrain from com-
ting, however, on some broad gen-
zations the author makes. He gen-
zes about Augustine, Calvin, Ar-
ius and Wesley, especially their
rines of man, without ever really
erstanding what these men meant.
curious, also, that in discussing
validity of the encounter, the au-
recalls the experience of Calvin,
e rejecting Calvin's conclusions on
nature of man. Is the assumption
Calvin's doctrine of man had noth-
to do with the encounter, but is
ly later theologizing which was
neous?
n age which has rediscovered the
munity of the Church is bound to
ct the basically individualistic con-
ion of the Church which this book
mes.
is to be hoped that this book does
tter job convincing a skeptic than it
convincing one who differs from
author's theological conclusions.
rofessor Otwell is Professor of Old
ament at Pacific School of Reli-
, Berkeley, California. — *Alva I.
, Jr., Department of Evangelism,
ional Council of Churches.*

AT CHRISTIAN PLAYS. *Edited by heodore M. Switz and Robert A. ohnston. Seabury. $7.50.*

he idea of this anthology is to pre-
church amateur dramatic groups
a handbook of plays, musical
es, costume sketches, and directing
gestions . . . a complete kit for the
luction of Christian drama. This
arises out of a need for help by
many churches that are readmit-
art into the chancel, accepting
n its contribution to the life of the
it. But that an aid and a need can
to meet is clearly demonstrated by
at Christian Plays.
ıcluded in this volume are five me-
al plays and several choral read-
to be rendered by speaking choirs.
face, foreword, and introductions
ınd with statements of the editors'
ntion to present selections "well
in the ability of even the smallest
sh or mission," but the contents
e me to suspect that the statements
urpose were written for another
and printed here by mistake. How
y small churches have a speech
r or if so can manage "the con-
tly shifting tones and voices of a
ıed speech choir" that the editors
sion The plays are still more hos-
to the amateur. In all five, the dia-
e is metrical, and in four of them
rhymed. These lines from "Toten-
tanz: A Medieval Morality Play" are a sample:

So God doth judge the world aright.
Both young and old, both serf and knight,
Lie in the ground and none can tell
If life for them was ill or well.
But all of those who sleep in dust
Shall rise again, God says they must
Arise and at this judgment seat
Receive what for their work is meet:
Some life eternal, others grief
And endless pain without relief.
If this speech can be "vigorous and alive" for us today it will require much more than good intentions to make it so.

Now admittedly, a dedicated group of amateur dramatists can, with great perseverance, struggle out of the technical pitfalls these works present. But do the plays here warrant it? To offset their forbidding medievality ,the editors insist that, "even though old, what they have to say and the problems with which they deal seem pertinent to our life today," and elsewhere they plead "the enduring relevance of their themes." Possibly there is truth enough in these statements to justify the use of one or two of these plays, but by devoting the entire book to works of antiquity the editors seem to despair of discovering Christian principles at work in art today. They say in support of their choices that these plays "arose . . . at a time when the church was the mother of the arts and before the drama had been secularized." But is it not a Protestant principle that God is present in secular existence as well as in sacred existence? If we believe that the artist works from intense personal conviction, and if Christian thought is truly fundamental, applying to life in our time just as well as to life in earlier centuries, then it is inescapable that much art produced today, whether commissioned by the church or not, is certainly Christian in the larger sense. By ignoring this, I think the work of Switz and Johnston obscures what it purports to facilitate. I am surprised to note that the book is sponsored by the Adult Division of the Department of Christian Education of the Episcopal Church, which is responsible for a new program of education stressing understanding and the use of Christian principles in daily living.

The pronouncement in the foreword that "effective Christian drama confronts participants with situations that are known in their own experience" is followed by "Abraham and Isaac," a fourteenth century play with a cast including: "Voice of God (deep, powerful, resonant . . . use public address system to give Voice greater volume)" and "Angel (like most Angels, modest and full of sympathy for those who suffer.)" Abraham and Isaac and the other plays in this book may have satisfied audiences of the Middle Ages, when the mind was a tentative tool, full of superstitions and ungovernable images, when fear was the force of the church. But they speak from dismal tombs to the modern hope for understanding.—*David L. Norton, St. Louis, Mo.*

THE MAN WHO WOULD PREACH. *By Robert E. Keighton. Abingdon. $2.00.*

Keighton of Crozer admits that almost everything that needs to be said about preaching was said by Henry Ward Beecher yet he bravely sends forth this brief book on the minister's nature, calling, and work. I am glad he did.

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which is called a "moment of transfiguration." If only tabernacles could be built here there will be other mountains—mountains of prayer, mountains of temptation, there will be valleys of service, plains of simple teaching, and gardens of agony. All of the frustrations of the ministry are here for "the minister does not lead a secluded existence, nor does he merely accept life; he challenges it and seeks to make it nobler, and these very ambitions lead him over difficult paths."

The author knows the minister, his hopes and fears. There are sentences that stab: "No one speak better than he is. . . . Truth is not enough; even more than truth is the form in which it is communicated. . . . It is not enough to be right; one must be acceptably right. . . . communication is . . . personal, and the sermon is also the man preaching it."

The burden of the book is found in two ideas: First, the sermon must be delivered acceptably. Second, the man is more important than the sermon—he is the pastor of the people and "the sermon is a means, not an end."

The book sparkles with literary quotations, but one nurtured in a warm evangelical tradition looks in vain for a clear, simple statement to the effect that it is not cleverness that we need in the pulpit today, but rather rock-like character and loving spirits, which come from walking with one who is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Saviour of sinful men.—*Ansley Cunningham Moore, Sixth United Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

PROGRESS AGAINST PREJUDICE. *By Robert Root. Friendship Press. $2.50.*

SEEKING TO BE CHRISTIAN IN RACE RELATIONS. *By Benjamin E. Mays. Friendship Press. $1.50.*

These two compact books may properly be considered companion volumes. The first describes varied instances of successful interracial experimentation in the United States through the eyes of a former reporter, free-lance writer and foreign correspondence, who is now associate professor of journalism at Syracuse University. The second, by the nationally known and respected president of Morehouse College, approaches the problems of race from the points of view of Christian faith and theology. The authors share the conviction that relationships between the races can and should be solved by Christian teachings finding expression through Christian churches.

Mr. Root makes no pretense of neutrality. He addresses whites as chief offenders. In a quick cross-country survey he finds an astonishing number of progressive activities and "success stories" in intergroup relations. He deals with public school situations, housing and employment opportunities, dying churches in changing neighborhoods, congregations with ministers of other races, Negroes honored at high levels by the churches. He uses his home town of Syracuse as a typical case study, from its awakening by a series of newspaper articles on slum dwellings to practical planning for improved housing and integration within churches.

Dr. Mays bases his reasoning for harmony and justice on the New Testament. The Christian God is the God of every race. A Christian can believe in no other. God is the father of all men. The life of each individual is of supreme worth and value. Therefore the life and happiness of every human being must be respected. Love of God and love of man are inseparable. They find perfect balance in Jesus. They are tragically broken by segregation. Race prejudice is a wicked thing, hurting segregated and the segregator. In author's discussion of church and r he emphasizes practical application these scriptural teachings. The preme Court decision of 1954 is offe as a challenge to the churches. Sta ments by national church bodies in cate a changing climate. It remains individual churches and Christian dividuals to harmonize faith with tion. The book concludes with a ser of searching questions, based on ea chapter, which call for more seric consideration and discussion by readers.—*O. M. Walton, executive rector, Council of Churches of Pittsburgh Area.*

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KE YOUR FAITH WORK—A Letter om James. *By Louis H. Evans. evell. $2.50.*

anyone is looking for a sample of tical, down-to-earth preaching, in uage that everyone can under- d, here it is. Luther is supposed to e referred to the Epistle of James letter of straw; but it is certainly that under the skillful exposition of Louis H. Evans, minister-at-large he Board of National Missions of Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Letter of James lends itself to ely and practical treatment more lily than the heavier letters of Paul. he faith which is made known by ks has a sure-fire appeal for the gmatic and activistic type of mind ch is found in the American rches particularly. This volume of nons is not a scholarly book, al- ugh it uses the results of the best larship. Nor is it a profound book. her, it endeavors to apply the prac- l and helpful admonitions of James he problems of life faced by ordi- y, everyday Christians and church nbers. So there is a folksy tone to sermons; they are filled with fire zeal; they pack a punch. The illus- ions are drawn from everyday situ- ns and the poetry quoted is of the irational, Edgar Guest variety.

am sure that nobody fell asleep le these sermons were preached, no one will fall asleep while read- the book. In fact, one ought not to mmend it to preachers, because ing read the sermons the tempta- to appropriate them is great. But if anyone wants to interest a parishioner in the reading of sermons and wants to recommend one which will not be laid down until finished, this book is it. This is popular preaching at its best—*Robert C. Stanger, Bethany Evangelical and Reformed, Chicago, Ill.*

CHRIST AND YOUR JOB. *By Alfred P. Klausler, Concordia, 145 pages, $1.50.*

AT the heart of Lutheran ethical teaching is the concept of the calling in which man is placed by God to serve his neighbor in love for Jesus Christ. For years Ernest Troeltsch's distortion of Luther's position obscured this concept. Translations of Swedish theologians Billing and Wingren on the subject are leading to its recovery. Author Klausler, editor of a Lutheran youth magazine, popularizes the recent research, often illustrating it with reference to youth programs in which he is involved.

Sometimes his outline skews: It is difficult, for instance, to see what part his discussion of race plays in this vocational study; and he does not deal sufficiently with the problem of serving God in callings that seem monotonous and uncreative. Nevertheless, Klausler's style should attract young people in their years of vocational decision. Moving freely in the world of the exurbanite, the power elite, and the lonely crowd, Klausler has collected material that should provide lively discussion for youth topics and material for sermons on work.—*M.E.M.*

Pulpit Calendar

August 4—8th Sunday after Pentecost.
August 6—The Transfiguration.
August 11—9th Sunday after Pentecost.
August 18—10th Sunday after Pentecost.
August 25—Festival of Christ the King, and 11th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 1—Labor Sunday and 12th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 2—Labor Day.
September 8—13th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 15—14th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 22—15th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 29—16th Sunday after Pentecost.
September 29-October 6—Christian Education Week.
October 6—17th Sunday after Pentecost.
October 6—World-wide Communion.
October 13—18th Sunday after Pentecost.
October 13—Men and Missions Day.
October 13-20—Churchmen's Week.
October 20—19th Sunday after Pentecost.
October 20—Laymen's Sunday.

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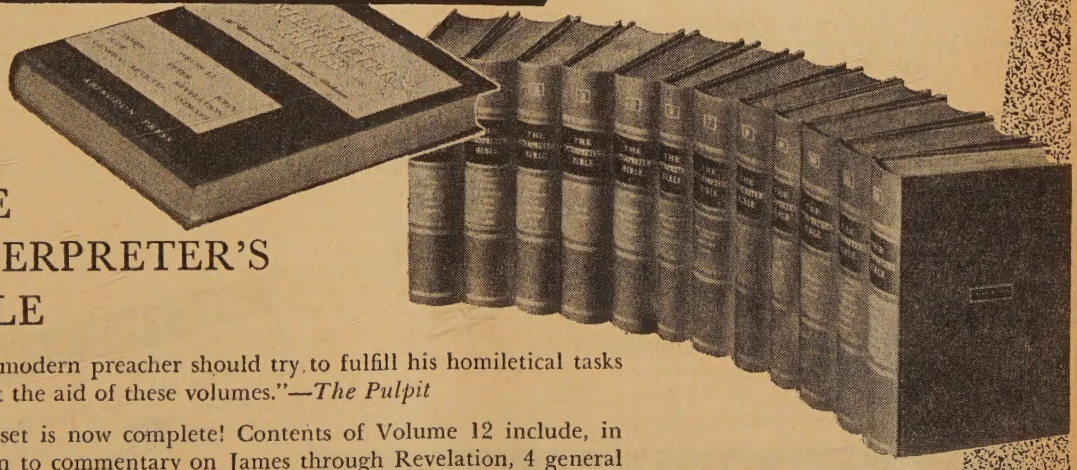

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